THE ENTERPRISE

GROWTH PLAYBOOK

How to build a high-performing
Growth Team in a large enterprise

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Featuring Experiments by **Growth**Hackers
Experiments

INTRODUCTION

Are you looking to build a growth team and do not know where to start? Look no further. This is the enterprise growth playbook, developed through experiences building growth teams in small and large enterprises. This includes building my own teams, participating in established teams, and helping to launch many internal growth teams.

First, a bit of background on me. Over the course of my career, I've used growth tactics against a target KPI to see consistent strong double-digit improvements and many cases of high triple digit gains. I have spent half of my career in small companies both in digital marketing as well as product management – mostly focused on launching and scaling new products.

The latter half of my career has been spent in IBM. After helping to bring IBM Watson to market, I built the growth team in IBM Watson, which became a model for other growth teams in IBM. In a corporate function, we took my model and established multiple "growth squads" within various parts of IBM. I later moved into the Cloud unit where I have focused on growth at the portfolio and product level.

To be fair, I didn't create all these teams. Some I created, some I didn't. Not all the growth teams succeeded. We failed in some cases, but we saw tremendous success in many others. I learned a lot of lessons along the way. I will share these lessons to help you establish a high-performing growth team.

Now, back to Growth. People often think that "Growth" is a silver bullet, as with the "Get Your Free Email at Hotmail" example or the Dropbox referral program, that catapults a product/business to success. These tactics were effective and generated amazing results, but I do not have any of these examples, personally. While perhaps not as creative, my results have been significant and consistent in their own right and that has everything to do with having the proper cross-functional team, a good growth process, and have a growth culture. You can experience results like this too.

I believe that process and culture are the most-important missing ingredients required to build a high-performing Growth Team. The goal of this book is to help you, a growth leader, lay the foundation for a successful growth team by outlining the proper team, tools, culture, and processes for your team.

Disclaimer: The thoughts and opinions in this e-book are my own and don't necessarily represent IBM's positions, strategies or opinions.

CHAPTER 1: THE JOB OF GROWTH

Growth is a relatively new role in larger companies. But what is it? In simple terms, the growth team is focused on growing the business using a cross-functional, agile team and data-driven decision-making. The primary outcome should be to accelerate growth of the business defined by some key KPI such as users, revenue, usage/adoption, and retention; however, the growth team provides other benefits as well. Your growth team can provide three critical functions for your product portfolio:
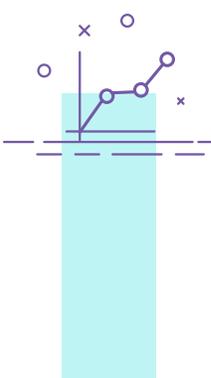
GROW THE BUSINESS AGAINST SPECIFIC KPI(S)

The growth team is best-known for intensely focusing on and improving your key KPIs. The growth team will understand the numbers of the business (i.e. customer acquisition, activation, revenue, retention). They will build and execute plans while working cross-functionally to improve those numbers to achieve the stated growth goal.

Growth teams have skills in product management, marketing, development, data and analytics, and agile processes.
They will apply these skills to rapidly test and improve their focus-KPI.
Again, using data-driven decision making.

While the growth team should have deep expertise in the numbers of your business and what levers will move them the best, it is critical to note that they are not a reporting function. Relying on the growth team for reporting is a mistake. The growth team knows the numbers inside and out and how to move those numbers. Bogging them down with reporting will hurt your business. Growth is a business building. Reporting, on the other hand, is operational. The reporting/analytics team will report on the numbers and provide insight but typically are not involved in improving the numbers directly.
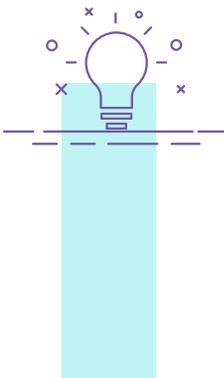
PROVIDE INSIGHT AND LEARNING

I like to say that a good growth team will get neck-deep in the data and walk around in it. By this, I mean that they will spend a lot of time digging into the most critical numbers to understand what is happening in the business. They will peel the onion layer by layer. More importantly, once they understand the numbers, they will get to work to improve those numbers.

Initially, they may make some small wins, they may fail, they may even hit some home runs. The net effect of all this data-driven experimentation is that they start to deeply understand what works and what doesn't. They will understand what drives the numbers.

The knowledge about what moves the numbers is when they become a powerful asset and producing three benefits for the organization:

The first benefit is that they will grow the business by pulling the levers that drive growth.

The second benefit is that they will share with the broader team what is and is not working; therefore, improving decision making for the broader team.

The final benefit is they can help you reduce risk in transformational projects. This is similar to the idea from Jim Collins of "firing bullets and cannonballs."

Quite simply, some organizations launch large transformational efforts with little validation as to whether they are on the correct track. In some cases, this is the right approach; however, in most cases, a few simple tests can help you understand the dynamics and guide your decisions on the larger effort with lower risk.

My favorite example of this was a project I did on a website. Over a few months, we improved the conversion of the website by a substantial amount. We cataloged months of knowledge, such as data/analysis, user interviews, and dozens of experiments. We then took a step back and decided that we were optimizing the wrong thing, we needed a new website. We built a new website that ultimately performed 50% better than the already highly optimized website.

CHAPTER1: THE JOB OF GROWTH

THE ENTERPRISE GROWTH PLAYBOOK

In this case, our dozens of experiments and months of learning were the "bullets" that allowed us to launch an entirely different website (cannonball) with low risk and big gains. Now, some might argue that a website is a trivial project, which I understand. However, we saw this scenario play out in larger efforts. I share the website example because it is an easy example to which any business can relate.
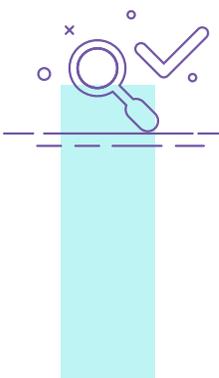
VALIDATE AND/OR FIND PRODUCT MARKET FIT

Most would argue that a growth team is not responsible for product market fit. Product market fit should be the role of the Product Management function. I agree with this, but I also believe that the growth team cannot function if there is no product market fit. You cannot grow and scale a business that is fundamentally broken. Before the growth team can really get to work, there must be some validation that there is product market fit.

If the product management function is doing its job properly of finding product market fit, then the growth team can help to confirm and validate it through benchmarking of KPIs and improving those KPIs. If you have not achieved product market fit yet, or have made some missteps, you may need to get to work with the product team on the fundamentals before you can start your growth efforts. The Growth team can assist in this regard by testing against key KPIs that would help understand where the product and market fit issues are, and they could work collaboratively to fix them before getting into scale type activities.

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CHAPTER 2:
TENETS OF GROWTH
- WHERE GROWTH
WORKS BEST

I f you asked professionals, "What is a growth team?" most would have no clue. From the enlightened, you would most likely hear a multitude of answers that center around marketing and A/B testing. Marketing and A/B testing are certainly important components of building a strong growth team; however, it's only one part of what makes a growth team successful.

A good growth team will do much more than marketing, a good growth team will work across the entire business but not all at once, mind you. A good growth team will look for areas of opportunity and inefficiency across the entire business that they can capitalize upon to accelerate growth. As a growth leader, you must think about the customer experience as an entire system that you can exploit.

The example below is a typical software product / SaaS business where the user comes to the website, registers, uses the product, pays for the product and continues to pay for the product. This could also be called a "self-serve" experience. There are other experiences that a customer might have as part of the system – e.g. a sales process and a customer success (onboarding, expansion) process.

VISIT WEBSITE	VIEW REGISTRATION	CREATE ACCOUNT	CONFIGURE AND SETUP PRODUCT (OPTIONAL)	USE PRODUCT	CONVERT TO PAID	CONTINUE USING / SPENDING
				SALES PROCESS	CUSTOMER SUCCESS PROCESS	
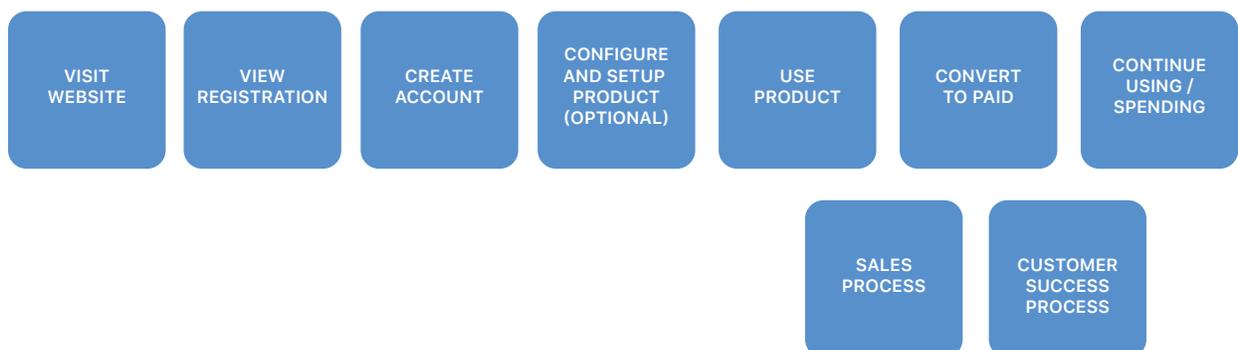
With this as our construct, we'll break down some of the core tenets upon which you must build your growth team to make it more effective.
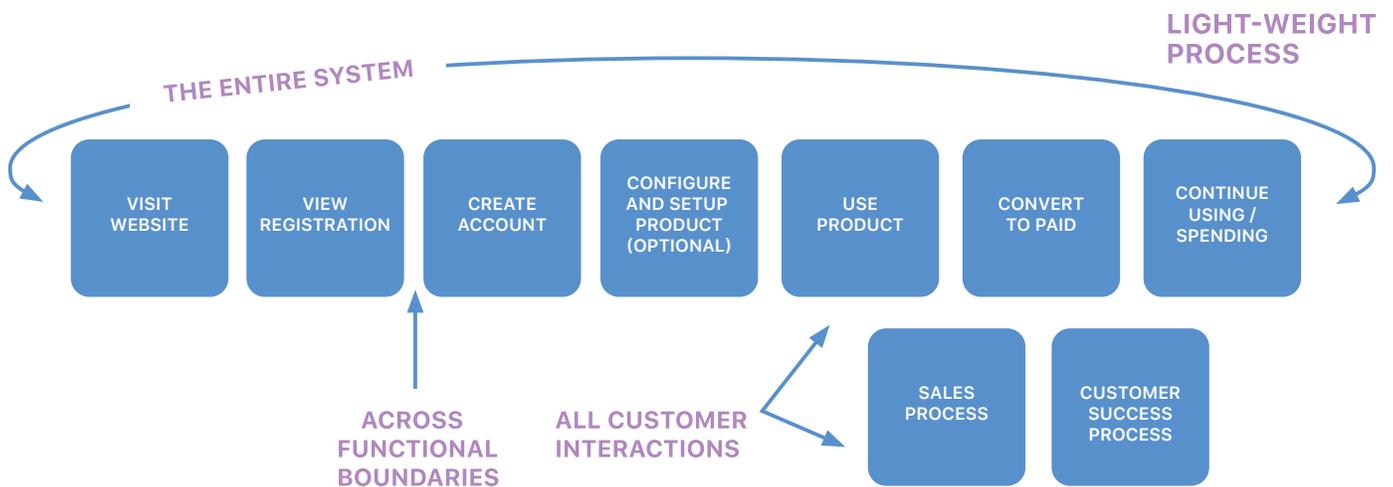
FOCUS ON THE ENTIRE SYSTEM

As you have learned, if you only focus on marketing pages, you are only optimizing and improving one part of the business (the inbound lead/trial part), and you are missing the remainder of the system. Net, you miss a lot of the potential to grow the business.

The true power of a growth team is improving the entire system. Improvements in one part of the system are compounded by improvements in other parts of the system. This compounding is what makes your growth team powerful.

To see exactly what I mean by compounding, let us look at a simple example. Pretend that your product has the following conversion rates:

View Registration: 10%

Create Account: 90%

Configure and Setup Product: 80%

Use product: 80%

Convert to paid: 30%

Retention: 98% Monthly

The number of paying customers would look like this over 5 years:
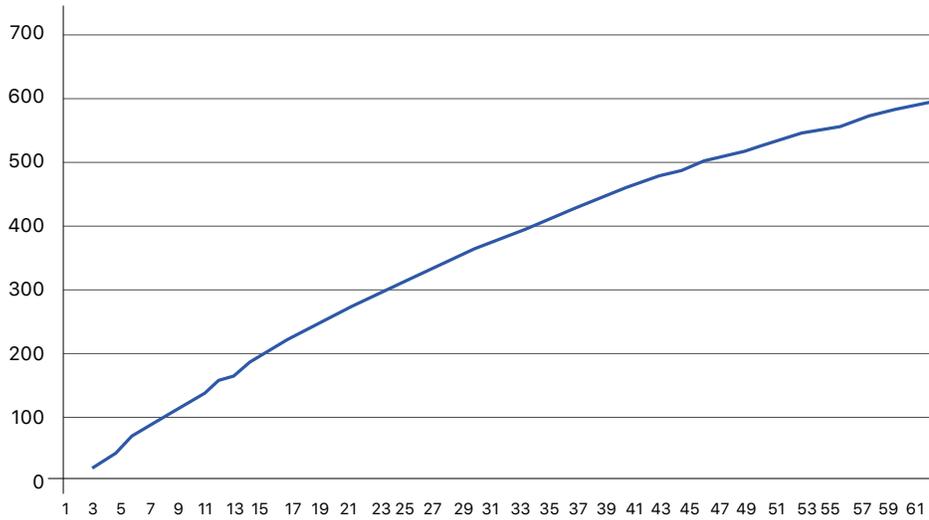
Imagine you could improve the "view registration page conversion rate" by 25%. With this improvement, the number of paying customers would grow to look like this over 5 years:
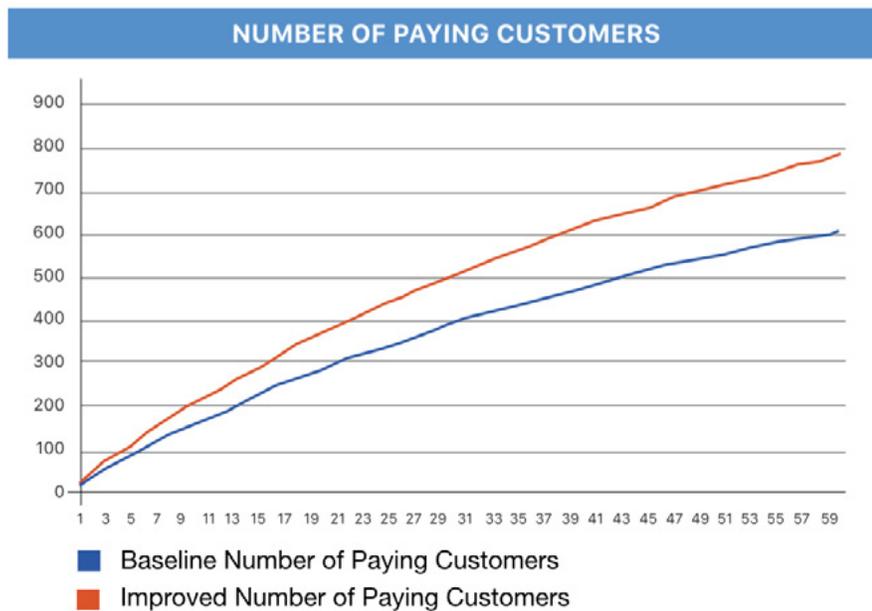
This is a strong improvement, and I'm sure your boss would be quite pleased with the progress; however, imagine if you could improve a few of these levers across the system.
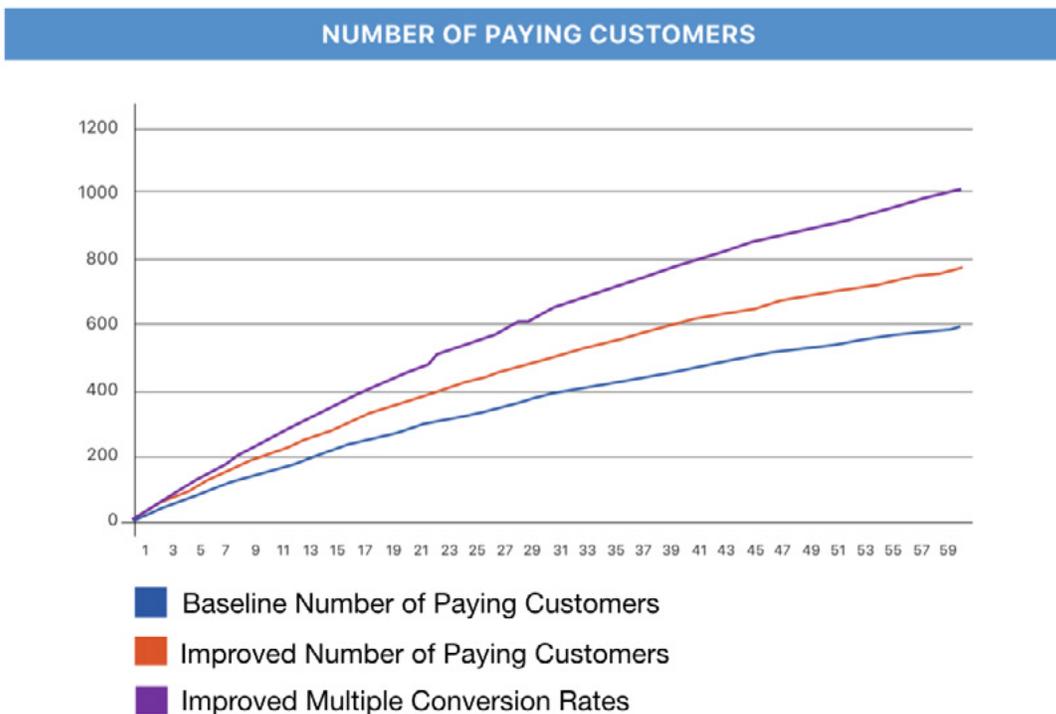
Ilmagine you improve the "view registration page conversion rate" by 25%, the paid conversion rate 25%, and the retention rate 25%. You can see the growth curve is much better:

Therefore, by improving multiple steps in the journey, your improvements start to compound upon one another. This is the power of growth.
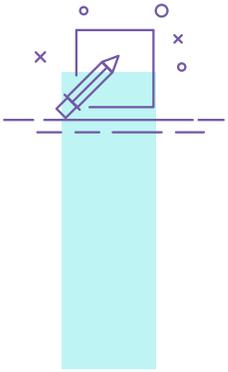
LIGHTWEIGHT (CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT) PROCESS

When I share some of the results my growth teams have achieved, people are intrigued and they typically ask, "What is the secret?". People expect that I will share an extremely interesting experiment such as the "Get Your Free Email at Hotmail" example. These tactics were incredibly effective, but I do not have any of these examples. The answer I give is "process."

IIn fact, you would be quite bored if I was to describe to you most of the tactics we employed. The real secret is a simple process that facilitates continuous improvement. In my experience, a simple weekly process gets your team focused on constantly improving. Success then comes over time through constant, systematic small wins. To borrow a baseball analogy, a lot of singles and a few doubles, triples, and maybe a home run.

To illustrate the point, imagine you are confronted with two possibilities:

1. **You can get 1% better every day this year.**

2. **You get 10x better by the end of the year.**
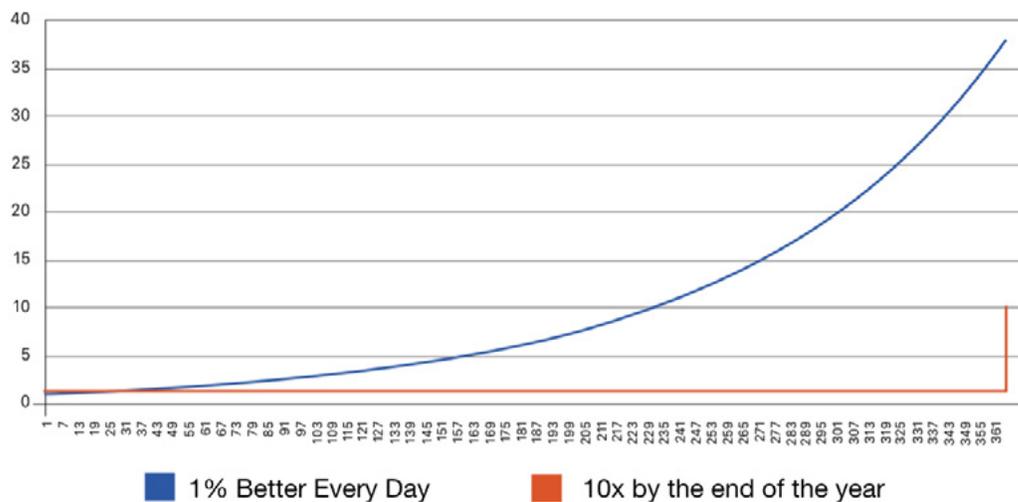
Now, you may have already seen this math – so, if you have, then my apologies. For those of you who have not, the answer is that you want to get 1% better every day. At the end of the year, you would be 37x better from where you started vs the 10x in one shot. I won't cover the process in this section, but rest assured it is focused on consistent improvement. It is also lightweight and flexible, which allows teams to make changes and adjust quickly based on learning.
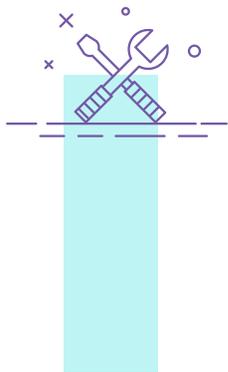
WORK ACROSS FUNCTIONAL BOUNDARIES

In many organizations, responsibilities become distributed across multiple silos and work is "thrown over the wall" from one team to the next. For example, the marketing team believes their job is to get prospects to the website. Once their job is done now the product team takes over. This will not work.

For starters, you miss out on a lot of opportunities by not bringing cross-functional skills across silos. Secondarily, because of the power of compounding, you must have the ability to work all the touchpoints to improve the entire system, and you need your peers in all functions to help.

MARKETING				PRODUCT MANAGEMENT	SALES	CUSTOMER SUCCESS
VISIT WEBSITE	VIEW REGISTRATION	CREATE ACCOUNT	CONFIGURE AND SETUP PRODUCT (OPTIONAL)	USE PRODUCT	CONVERT TO PAID	CONTINUE USING / SPENDING
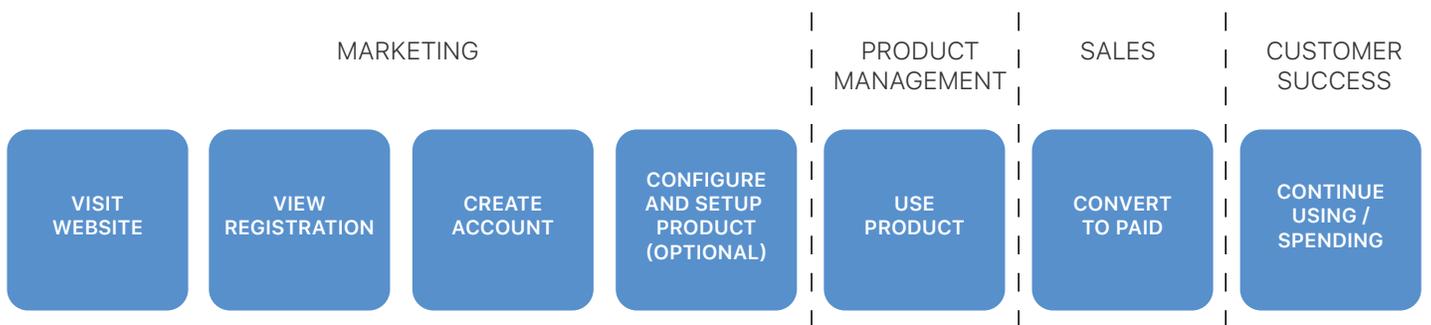
The most effective approach is to form a cross-functional squad that brings owners from each of the functional areas of responsibility into the growth team. This includes marketing, product, sales, and customer success. This allows the empowered team to make decisions and execute across all areas of the experience. Not only does this improve the team's ability to execute, but it also brings new perspectives and skills over the organizational "line" to benefit the team.

MARKETING				PRODUCT MANAGEMENT	SALES	CUSTOMER SUCCESS
VISIT WEBSITE	VIEW REGISTRATION	CREATE ACCOUNT	CONFIGURE AND SETUP PRODUCT (OPTIONAL)	USE PRODUCT	CONVERT TO PAID	CONTINUE USING / SPENDING

◄———————————— GROWTH ————————————►
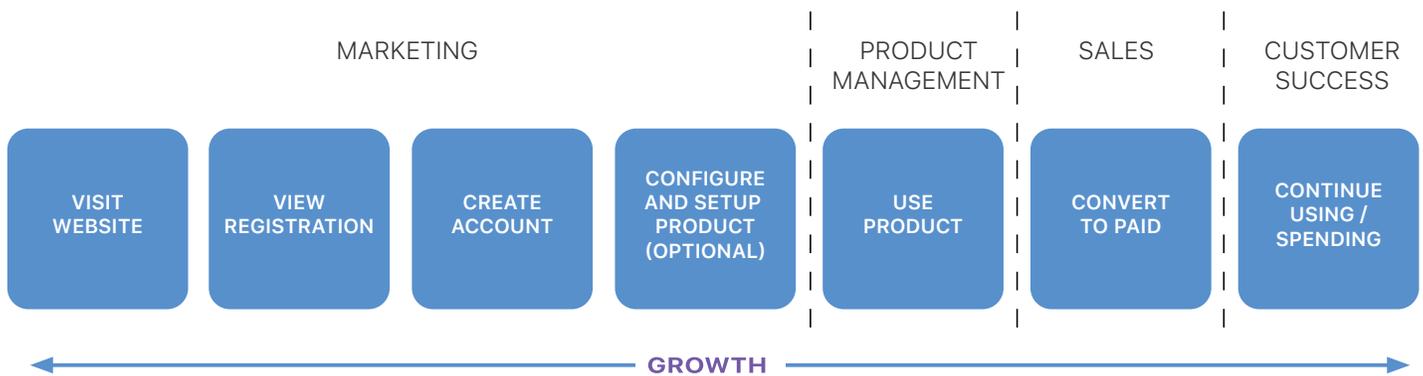
For example, I've seen multiple occasions where a product manager is primarily focused on a functional UI, whereas a marketer or customer success representative sees an opportunity for an up-sell (e.g. Customer Success: "Customers who add more users in this dialog are typically more likely to buy a premium, we could add a link to upgrade to a paid plan here in this dialog").

I've also seen examples where a product manager/engineer has been able to dramatically improve the results from a marketing demo by a adding deeper understanding of the customer needs/benefits on a feature.

In some organizations, forming a cross-functional team like this can create concerns around "stealing credit for another team's work". I've found that the most effective way to inoculate against this is to speak in terms of "we" and "they" vs "me" and "I". In other words, the growth team should be generous in their praise for the beneficial work that is happening outside of the team and only use the words "we" (as in us, the collective team, not only the people with "growth" in their title) to promote the advances that the collective growth team is making.

CHAPTER 3: GROWTH LEADERS - CREATE A GROWTH CULTURE

I t is an expected norm that new, smaller, entrepreneurial companies are more inclined towards a working growth mindset - everyone wants to "act like a startup." This norm is not because large companies are not fast or smart. In my large company experience, I've seen teams repeatedly achieve the impossible and deliver a project with amazing speed. Similarly, I've worked with the most brilliant minds in the world. A big part of the reason that large companies struggle with something new, like a growth team, is because the systems, processes, and cultures are designed and optimized around a different way of doing business. Growth, as a newer set of skills, was not around twenty years ago. What is more, as companies grow, they build silos where teams become distributed and form microcultures. These are the things that make it difficult to operate more nimbly.

As previously noted, I have come to believe that the process and culture are perhaps most important. We will focus on the process, but you must also work to establish the proper culture. Your job is to create a culture that fosters cross-functional work that is aligned on a common metric, which rewards learning. It must also allow a process that enables iteration vs too much planning.

We will cover each of these in more detail but this is your cheat sheet:

Create a culture of Growth

What works	What doesn't work	Guidance for Growth Leaders
• Common goal / KPI across teams	• Disconnected goals/metrics across silos	• Shared KPI – Product Management, Marketing, (optional) Sales and Engineering leadership agree to a common target KPI that the collective growth team will improve.
• Velocity goal for experimentation	• No capacity for experimentation	• Velocity – OM, Marketing and Engineering leadership, commit to a target number of experiments per month
• Deep collaboration between functions	• "Protect my turf" – working in silos, throwing work over the wall	• Collaboration – Product Management, Marketing, (optional) Sales and Engineering team attend sprint meetings and daily scrum • Accountability – Product Management, Marketing and Engineering leadership attend "end of sprint" readouts on results
• Empowered team	• A heavy process, with too many approvals	• Cross-functional team design/launch experiments - Marketing, Product Management, (optional) Sales and Engineering are empowered to work together at the level of execution to decide, design and launch experiments, should not require multiple approvals
• Transparent, open conversations about what is working vs what is not.	• only reporting positive results, hiding details of failed experiments,	• Reward learning and action – reward the team for acting. Celebrate a "failed" experiment if the team learned or has a new hypothesis and is taking the correct next action. Don't accept "it failed, and we don't know why".
• Consistent incremental progress	• Too many big bets	• The right mix of big bets and incremental gains. Have a focus on small improvements daily which will compound to larger gains. Celebrate "small" wins.
• Data for decision-making, not perfect data	• Spending too much time trying to get "perfect data"	• Decision-making vs perfect data - focus the team on making decisions to improve adoption/retention, not "perfect data".

COMMON GOAL / KPI ACROSS TEAMS

What works: Common goal / KPI across teams

What does not work: Disconnected goals / metrics across silos

Whether you are in a large or small company, data and metrics drive your actions. As a company grows, and the silos start to form, it is inevitable that we will select different metrics that we will own and/or drive. If your executive team is smart-enough to align your metrics, then count yourself lucky. All too often we are governed by metrics that do not necessarily align outcomes.

For example, the marketing team may have a pipeline target. The product manager is responsible for an overall revenue number. The sales team is responsible for new MRR per month. In theory, these numbers align, but the reality is that they don't always align.

MARKETING
Goal: $100k Opportunity Pipeline Per Month
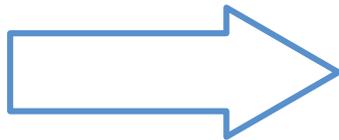
PRODUCT MANAGEMENT
Goal: Achieve $200m revenue for portfolio
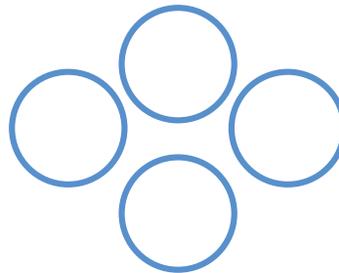
SALES
Goal: Achieve $60k new MRR per month

MARKETING ACTIVITY

PORTFOLIO

NEW CONTRACT

For example, the product team is focused on growing a next generation product line and are not investing in the legacy product. The marketing team needs to help bring that new product to market, but they are focused on a pipeline number for sales which is really your largest / legacy product. The sales team is going to close quota, so they will close against any product in the portfolio. However, it is probably the legacy product since it is in the market, whereas the new product is a harder sell. Oh, by the way, this is an MRR business, so the product management team truly just needs to focus on revenue churn to hit their number. New MRR will not get you there. So, while the numbers seem to align, they are out-of-whack one layer down. This results in inefficiency.

Teams take local action in their role to achieve their number, but it loses efficiency because the other teams are not wholly focused on this same number. If the strategic objective is to grow the "next generation" product, then the metrics for the team, or a subset of the team, should align around the adoption objective for the next generation product.

The following shows an example of better-aligned metrics so that all the teams are moving in the same direction.

MARKETING
Goal: 200 new active trials per month for next generation product

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT
Goal: %20 free to paid conversion for next generation product

SALES
Goal: Achieve $30k new MRR per month for next generation product

MARKETING ACTIVITY

PORTFOLIO

NEW CONTRACT

Now, I 100% advocate aligning metrics like the example above; however, if possible, the most effective growth teams I've been a part of have aligned around the same number.

For example:

Total number of active users
   (product and marketing)

Total number of paying customers
   (product and marketing)

Revenue for a single product
   (product, marketing, and sales)

When we aligned the team around the same metric, everything snapped into place and improvements started to compound upon one another. In the marketing example, the product and marketing teams teamed together under the mantra of "you bring them to the funnel, we'll bring them through the funnel." Our actions would compound upon one another. This resulted in doubling our trial metric in only two months.

So, the question is, what do you do? Executive leadership (top-down) and functional leaders (bottom-up) align around a single focus metric. This will get the team focused and eliminate the subtleties in differences in measurements. Note, the single focus doesn't have to be forever but pick an area to focus on for a specific timeframe.

As the team becomes more cohesive, you can expand to select other targets. Finally, build executive accountability around that metric such as regular reporting: cross-functional where the executive leader and functional leader are looking at the results and the actions to drive that number.
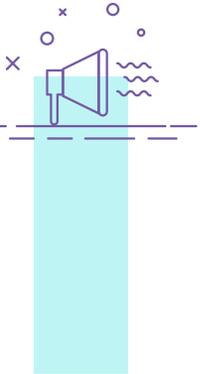
VELOCITY GOAL FOR EXPERIMENTATION

What works: Velocity goal for experimentation

What doesn't work: no capacity for experimentation

We all want to be agile, we want to run iterative experiments, but we can't always do so. What gets in our way? Unsurprisingly, the thing that gets in our way is time and priorities - revenue targets, roadmap commitments, perhaps customer/contractual obligations, monthly operational reviews, etc.

These commitments are important; however, sacrificing incremental improvements and experiments may mean that you are sacrificing learning. How so? Think of it this way, how many data points do you need to identify a trend. The answer is 3.

If you are only making monthly releases, you are effectively only learning every two months because you need at least 3 dots to see a trend. If you release weekly, you learn something new every 2 weeks. The team who releases weekly will complete 4 learning cycles in the same amount of time that the "monthly" team completes one cycle.

Now, imagine how quickly you can learn if you release daily. Of course, some experiments take longer than 1 week to run, nevertheless, the guidance holds. The more releases/experiments you run, the more quickly you can learn. In this day in age, you cannot afford to learn slowly, particularly in the technology industry.

While I ordinarily wouldn't advocate for an activity-based goal, in this case, I think an activity goal helps to enforce a learning culture. Give your team a goal for number of experiments completed in a week or month.

This will ensure your team is prioritizing incremental improvement/experiments - ie: learning. It will also help your team to build the muscle of launch, measure, learn, repeat. Finally, because some experiments take time, it will help you to build a portfolio of experiments/learning by launching short-term and long-term experiments to keep the learning velocity high.
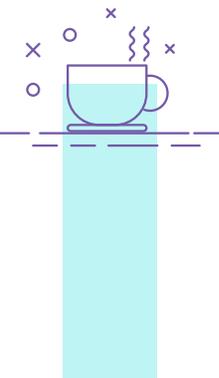
DEEP COLLABORATION BETWEEN FUNCTIONS

What works: Deep collaboration between functions

What doesn't work: "Protect my turf" – working in silos, throwing work over the wall

Operationally, it takes product management, development, marketing, and sales to define, build, deliver and sell a product. All too often, there is too much separation of duties across role boundaries.

Product Management:
Define the product

Design
Design the product

Development
Build the product

**Marketing**
Market the product

Sales
Sell the product
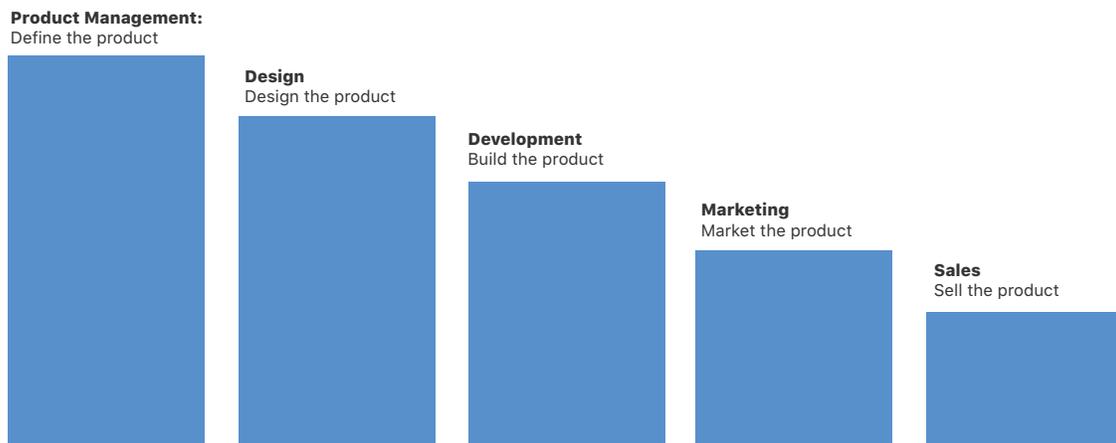
For example, the product manager defines the product/feature (with customer input) and works with development and design to deliver the product. When the product is nearly complete, the marketing team is engaged to create the marketing message/collateral and take it to market.

Due to specialization, focus on specific roles/responsibilities, the product manager is not thinking about marketing in the product definition. This leaves a set of critical skills out. Marketing skills could help in the design, which could improve the adoption/conversion based on the new feature. For example, could we market the new feature "in app" with an upsell that moves the customer to a higher plan/payment level.

Or, perhaps, the marketing team crafts their messaging without the benefit of the input from sales who has had a myriad of customer conversations. In this regard, the sales team can help the marketing team develop messaging that has already been "field tested."

Whatever the scenario in your organization, there are assuredly inefficiencies when the team does not work together. To achieve the best results, form a cross-functional squad, which involves product management, marketing, and sales functions in the design of the product/feature. This allows you to bring skills across the organizational line which should improve the effectiveness of your releases.
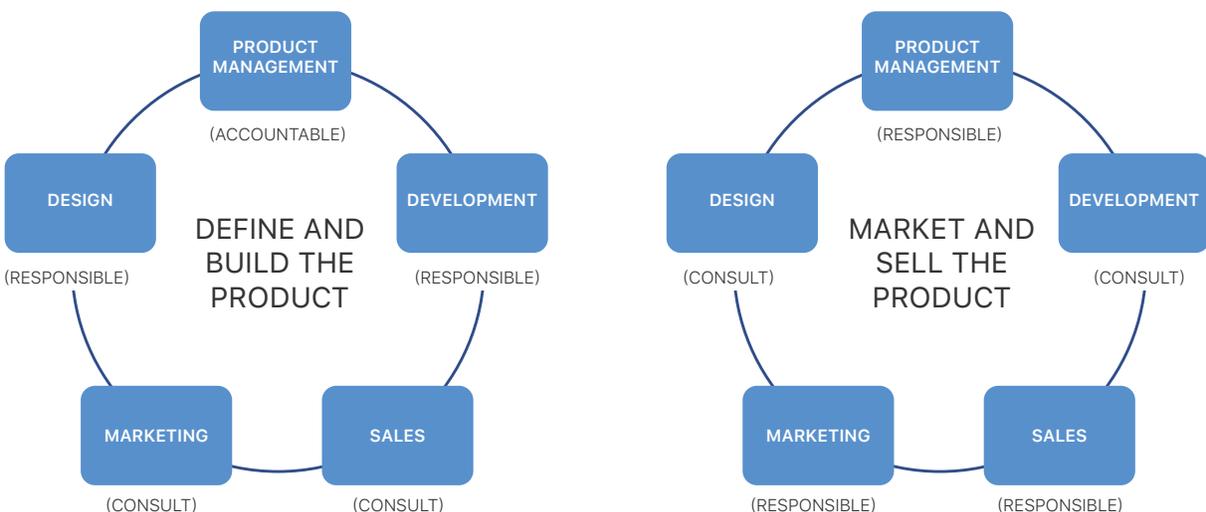
EMPOWERED TEAM

What works: Empowered team

**What does not work: A heavy process
with too many approvals**

Large organizations tend to be criticized for being slow-moving. The reason is too much process and bureaucracy. I don't believe it is entirely the case that there is too much bureaucracy. While bureaucracy exists, nearly all processes can have exception processes when something needs to be expedited. More often, the problem is too many decision-approvals because people aren't properly empowered to make decisions.

This could be because the team is empowered but seeks to reduce personal risk by spreading decision making across a group – to which this must be dealt with. The issue could also be that the leadership has not set boundaries around the decision-making process in terms of what does/does not need approval.

Whatever the case for your team, push the decision-making authority down to the growth team, which removes the layers of approvals. In some cases, you need proper approval processes so you will need to ensure your processes have the appropriate level of granularity. Do not let all decisions get hung-up in a process. Provide proper guidance for what constitutes a bigger and non-reversible decision and simple guidance for the team around when the decision needs to go through it. This allows the team to act quickly where they can but ensures the right oversight on things that require it.

For example, boundaries could be something like:

If there is a revenue/customer-risk, less than $100,000, then no approvals needed.

If there is a brand-risk, i.e. a negative experience could result in negative press/negative impact on the brand, then seek additional approvals.

If the project requires less than 3 months of development, then no approvals needed.

In some cases, the decisions are not well-contained within the team who is making the changes. For example, the team is making decisions that affect a product/experience that is owned by someone else. In this case, I have a rule, which is "we turn the key together." The growth team can setup the changes to get it ready to launch and then ask for "approval" (or, if possible, just provide an FYI for awareness) to the person who owns that process/experience. This helps to ensure a good working relationship with the stakeholders that your growth team must work with.
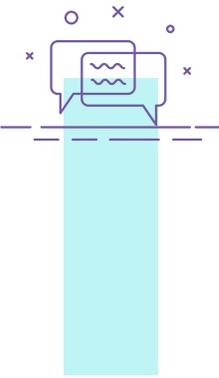
TRANSPARENT, OPEN CONVERSATIONS

What works: Transparent, open conversations about what is working vs. what is not

What does not work: Only reporting positive results, hiding details of failed experiments

Because we care about our personal brand, we sometimes tend to report only positive outcomes. In simple terms, the world becomes rosier as information floats to the top while the ugly failures stay down at the front lines. The reality is that we need both the positives and negatives in order to learn what does and doesn't work. The failures are a form of data that you as a leader can use to make decisions and grow your business.

EXPERIMENT	EXPERIMENT	EXPERIMENT	EXPERIMENT

As a leader, you need this data, so it is your job to create a transparent culture where your team feels they can share both the positives and negatives without fear of retribution. The caveat is that you need accountability. You obviously do not want to create a culture where people do not care whether they succeed or fail. You can enforce accountability without sacrificing transparency.

There are two simple checks to ensure the classification of a "good" failure:

1. **Was the "failed experiment/project" initially based on sound market data as well as a good logical step based on a customer?**

2. **When the team presents the failure, have they taken the time to learn what caused the failure and are now actively taking the logical next step?**

If the answer to both is "yes," then the team should be supported in their efforts and not adversely penalized. If the answer to either is no, then it is truly a failure and you should hold the team accountable. Failure with no learning and no next step is truly a failure.
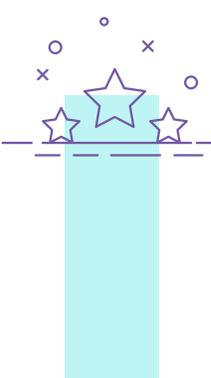
CONSISTENT INCREMENTAL PROGRESS

What works: Consistent incremental progress

What does not work: Too many big bets

As business leaders, we tend to focus on defining a strategy building a roadmap and then executing. This is a good thing. However, in some organizations, because it can be difficult to measure the impact we have made, we sometimes reward people (i.e. promotions) for delivery upon commitments vs. impact to the business metrics. Again, this is because complex delivery is in many cases easier to measure than a contribution to a specific KPI.

This means we create a big plan (i.e. roadmap or project) and doggedly pursue the delivery of that plan. Sometimes this is the right thing to do, but not always. On the other hand, we can make significant improvements by focusing on consistent incremental improvement. While the small wins may not seem like much initially, the magic of the small improvements is that they can compound over time. This can lead to significant outcomes.

To illustrate, the chart below demonstrates the difference between a goal of 1% every day versus achieving a 10x improvement by the end of the year.
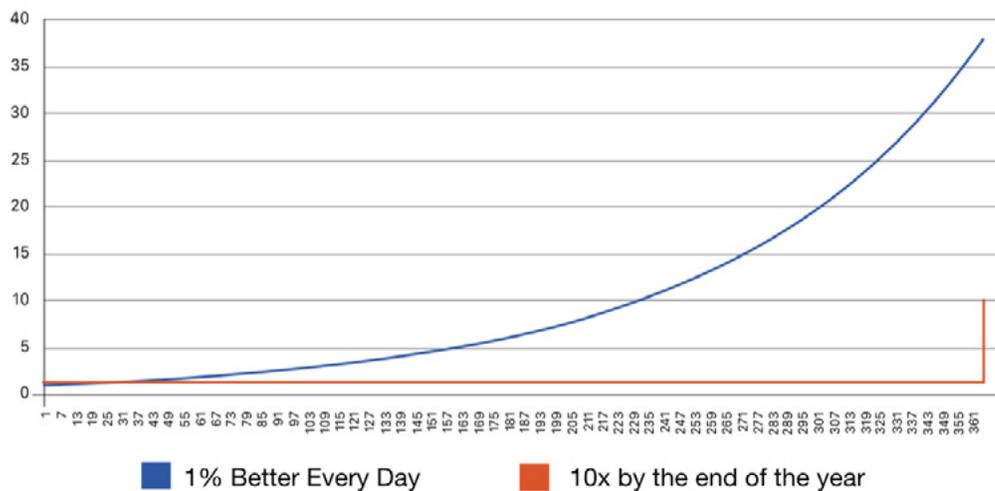
To be clear, you do need large projects, but we should also focus the team on consistent, small improvements daily which can compound to larger gains.
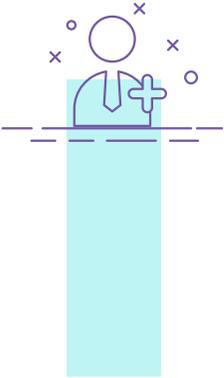
DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING, NOT PERFECT DATA

What works: data for decision-making, not perfect data

What does not work: perfect data

In many cases, the data we want is imperfect: we want more data, the data isn't totally accurate, etc. We should get good data where we can; however, sometimes we can't get perfect data.

As a leader, your job is to look for trends and make decisions, and in many cases, the data is good enough for decision-making. To get past the issues of "perfect data," understand where the issues are with the data. Focus on understanding accuracy and reliability.

Your job as a leader is to simply understand the sources of bias in the data. As long as it is generally reliable, you should feel empowered to make decisions to keep moving your business forward.

BONUS: PEOPLE MAKE DECISIONS, NOT DATA

Whether you are in a large or small organization, you undoubtedly have a myriad of data analysis tools available to you. With all these tools and data available, it's increasingly easy to fall into the trap of telling yourself, "We need more data to make a decision." There are three big reasons this is a trap:

1. DATA IS IMPERFECT

It can be quite difficult to get good data in some companies. For example, accounting systems may be complex due to international accounting law. You may have access and permission issues, and data and systems such as analytics and sales tools may not all "talk" to each other. Alternatively, it may be impossible to design a good A/B test because other teams are changing variables underneath you without your knowledge or ability to control. Whatever the reason, your data will always have flaws. Fix this where you can but get comfortable with the fact that the data isn't perfect – it will likely never be perfect, there will always be bias.

2. WAITING FOR PERFECT DATA WILL SLOW YOU DOWN

Understand where and what the issues are so that you can make decisions knowing where there may be bias. Waiting for perfect data will only slow you down.

3. DATA CAN BE MANIPULATED TO TELL ANY STORY

We have all done it. We have all manipulated data to tell a good story. Employees are naturally inclined to share the most positive news while downplaying the negative. Statistical rigor can help minimize this, but it is not a perfect cure. Unless you do all the analysis yourself, which will limit your effectiveness as you grow in your career, then you need to understand that people will naturally share the positive and you may not always get the negative.

As a growth leader, I want perfect data, I want statistical rigor to eliminate bias but it's not always available or possible. What's more, as you grow in your career into an executive role, you will inevitably encounter situations where you cannot get all the data due to issues such as complexity, speed, etc. Whatever the reason, you must realize that you make decisions, not the data. Data is simply your tool to help guide your decisions.

When you view yourself as the decision-maker, you lessen your dependence on perfect data. This will make you more effective as a leader and, ultimately, an executive. To do this, you must train yourself on three principles:

A. Will More Data Change the Decision

A mentor shared this principle with me, and it entirely changed the way I think about using data for decision-making. This person, now a CEO, said that he does not tolerate his team "asking for more data before they can make a decision." He asks, "If you get more data, will it change the decision you will make or only make you more comfortable?"

If people were honest with themselves, nine times out of ten, the answer is, "Make me more comfortable," in which case he says to make the decision. In the cases in which you do need more data, get it. Learn to ask yourself this simple question and you will find that your decision time increases as well as your confidence in your own decision-making skills.

B. Reliability vs. Accuracy

When it comes to imperfect data, there are two dimensions to consider: accuracy and reliability. To illustrate, imagine you have a metric that is "100." If your data is accurate, it would measure 100 every time.
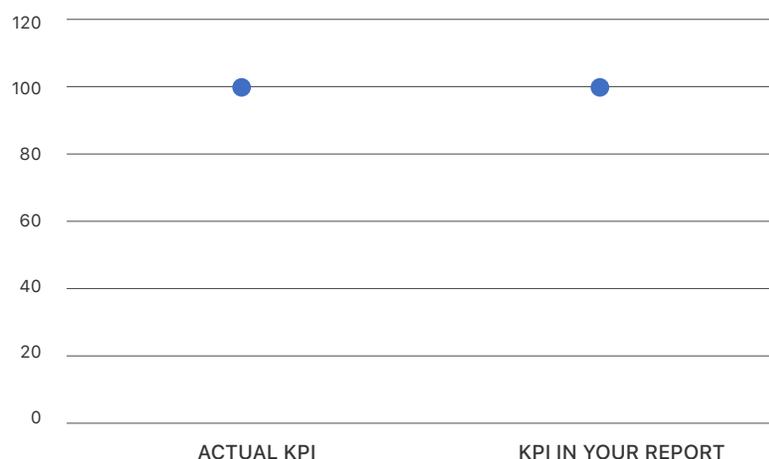
If your data is reliable, it may measure something like 101, 99, 98, 102, 100. While the data is not exactly accurate, it is reliable.
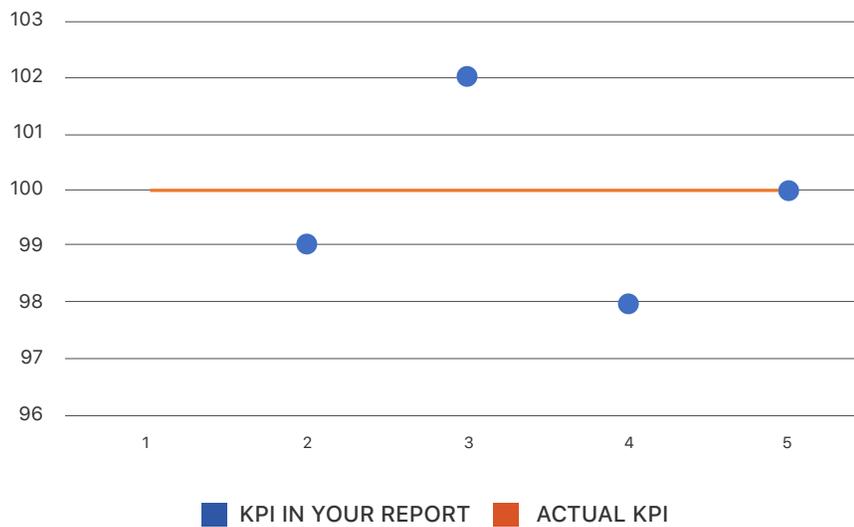
When I compare data sets from different systems (for example, an accounting system compared to a BI reporting tool), I am looking for reliable data. This allows me to ignore some of the inconsistencies and irregularities and to focus on trends and patterns as my basis for decision making. You can use reliable data even if it is not 100% accurate, but in most cases, the difference in accuracy would not change the decision anyway.

C. Big Enough to Matter

In simple terms, if you are looking at a small number with low variation, it will take a long time to confirm (statistically) that the change is, in fact, better or worse. This can make it difficult to make decisions. It can also limit your ability to launch new tests.

If a statistical approach is not possible or will take too long, watch the trends and look for big changes. In many cases, you can look at the data and decide if it is making a difference. The chart below was a target metric that we were trying to improve. Regardless of the statistical data, we knew in week one that it was better, and we did not wait to confirm. We rolled it out straight away.

I have had countless other cases where we looked at a line and saw relatively no change. The mistake is to say, "Wait, let us gather more data and see whether the number improves." The chart below shows a change we rolled out. If you squint a bit, it looks a little better. It could also be a statistical variation.

The simple fact is if it is that difficult to determine whether the change is a winner or loser then the answer is that it really does not matter anyway. It does not hurt you, but it does not truly help you. Move on to find something that can make a bigger improvement.

Now, the caveat is that I'm not saying to ignore statistics entirely. If you can take a rigorous approach promptly, that is a good thing. However, in many cases, we do not always have that luxury. If you find yourself in that situation, then feel empowered to decide based on whether the change is material or not.

CHAPTER 4: PREREQUISITES

PRODUCT / MARKET FIT

As we have already covered, you should not build a growth team if fundamentally you do not have a viable business. You will be dumping water into a leaking bucket. The growth team should focus on scale when you have something viable. That being said, you may not have the luxury of waiting on product / market fit before starting your growth team. In this case, the growth team can work closely with the product management function to understand where the issues are and then address (and validate) them together.

Let us digress into a brief segue into what is product market fit and how to do some light validation before you start.

WHAT IS PRODUCT MARKET FIT?

Marc Andreesen defined Product market fit in his post, "The Only Thing That Matters." Andreesen does not define product market fit as being in a good market with a product that can satisfy that market. He goes on to describe when it is and is not happening:

 # You can always feel when product/market fit is not happening.

The customers are not quite getting value out of the product, word of mouth is not spreading, usage is not growing that fast, press reviews are kind of "blah," the sales cycle takes too long, and lots of deals never close.

And you can always feel product/market fit when it is happening.

The customers are buying the product as fast as you can make it, or usage is growing as fast as you can add more servers. Money from customers is piling up in your company checking account. You are hiring sales and customer support staff as fast as you can. Reporters are calling because they have heard about your hot new thing and they want to talk to you about it.

LIGHT VALIDATION OF PRODUCT MARKET FIT

This book will not go into exhaustive detail on validating product market fit, but there are two steps you can perform to check for product market fit – customer conversations and benchmarking. These analyses will help you walk away with an understanding of whether you have a product that you can work with or not.

Customer interviews are exactly what they sound like – speaking with the sales and customer success team or the customer success team finding out which types of customers you win with and why customers choose you vs. the competition. Speak with a few new customers and, if you can, a few "losses" (customers who considered your offering but decided not to proceed) about the same thing. It will not take many conversations to understand whether or not you have a viable product / market fit.

If you have product market fit, similar to Andreesen's comments, you will find generally happy customers using your product to solve real problems. The lost deals will have reasonable explanations. If you do not have it, you will find dissatisfied customers who are struggling to use your software in real ways. Losses will find consistent themes around the fundamentals – not solving a problem, no need for it, does not work as advertised, too expensive, etc.

For the quantitative types, you can also compare your key conversion marks with industry metrics. Such as trial conversion rates, paid conversion rates, and retention rates. While there is always some bias in averages, you should find that your key KPIs are in the same ballpark of the industry averages.

SEAN ELLIS PRODUCT MARKET FIT SURVEY

If the explanation above leaves you feeling dissatisfied, there is another tool you can use to determine whether you have product market fit. The product market fit survey created by Sean Ellis is a quantitative tool that enables you to understand help you understand if early customers consider your product a must-have. You can read a detailed description of how to use the survey on the Growth Hackers blog.

The survey asks a simple question to understand how users would feel if they could not use the product. Ellis posits that understanding how users feel if they cannot use the product is a leading indicator of whether there is a true product market fit. How can you use the tool, it is simple, the survey is a single question.

"How would you feel if you could no longer use [ProductName]?"

\# **Very disappointed**

\# **Somewhat disappointed**

\# **Not disappointed**

\# **N/A I no longer use [ProductName]**

The survey should be sent to users who have recent "real usage" of the product. To describe "real usage", Ellis uses an example of Uber – the popular app that matches riders and drivers to provide transportation between locations for a fee.

For example, if you were Uber and wanted to get feedback from people who have tried the service, it wouldn't be enough to focus on people who just downloaded or signed up for the app. You would want to survey people who had actually taken a ride (or driven a passenger if they are a driver).

After you've sent your survey to users with real usage, the question is inevitably how to determine whether there is product market fit. Sean Ellis has benchmarked nearly 100 startups and has found that the magic number is 40%. According to Ellis, companies that struggle to find growth typically had less than 40% of users respond "very disappointed" in the survey, whereas companies with stronger growth potential typically always exceeded the 40% threshold.
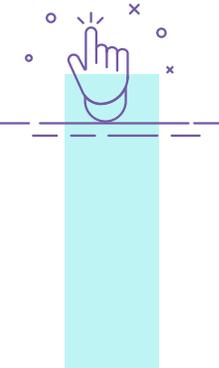
THE TOOLS OF GROWTH

To be effective, there is a small set of tools that your growth team will require to be efficient. These tools enable a deep understanding of users, the ability to optimize conversions, and reporting. It is important to note that all these tools are not mutually exclusive, some of the tools may span multiple categories. By the way, if you do not have budget, the good news is that there are a lot of free tools that you can use to get started, such as Google Analytics and Optimize for example.
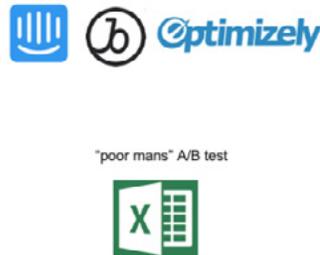
DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF USERS

User behavior is at the core of growth. Happy users result in happy and retained buyers, ergo improve user behavior and improve the business. However, you cannot improve user behavior if you do not understand it. There are two broad categories of tools to help you better understand user behavior: qualitative and quantitative tools.

QUALITATIVE

Qualitative is good old fashioned "talk to users and understand their needs." The objective is to understand your customer in a deep way that analytics simply cannot. For example, understand what customers need, why they choose you, where they struggle to use your product, and what problems your product does or does not solve for them.

There are many questions you will want to answer. Talking to customers and prospects is one of the most valuable things in which you can spend your time. There is a vast array of materials you can use to learn this such as Customer Development (Steve Blank), Design Thinking, User Interviews, etc. If you are fortunate to have a design team with user research skills, count yourself lucky; however, a good Product Manager should be fluent in these types of techniques.

Barring these user interviews, there are also a variety of tools that make this easier. There are tools such as Full Story, Tea Leaf, and others that record users' sessions. Your growth team can (and must) watch these sessions to understand how users are using your product.

Another great tool for this qualitative understanding is UserTesting.com, which allows you to see and hear your customers using your products. You can define targeted tasks, ask survey questions, and more.

QUANTITATIVE

"Quantitive" is the hard data that we all know and love. While we are all accustomed to looking at reports such as revenue, web traffic, etc., these metrics are not to which I am referring. The most important tool is a tool that enables the ability to do cohort analysis.

Cohort analysis breaks your users into smaller groups for more detailed analysis. In terms of segments, the sky is the limit. You can segment users based on any number of things, such as when they become a customer, campaign codes that brought them to you, amount of annual spend, people who have/have not used a particular feature, and more. You need this ability to look at the groups of users who you are affecting based on your experiments.

Without a doubt, my favorite tool for this is a product called Amplitude. Amplitude provides many functions, but my favorite reports are the funnel analysis and cohort analysis charts.

OPTIMIZE CONVERSION

To improve conversion, you'll need the ability to interject a change into the user experience / product to (hopefully) positively influence performance. There are many ways to do this. Typically, the best way is to change the product itself. This of course takes time and assumes you know what to "fix" in order to positively change performance. In the absence of knowing the correct changes and having the time and resources to change the product, you need tools that allow you to interject and test. There are two basic tools you'll want: A/B testing and nurture

A/B TESTING ON WEB PAGES / PRODUCTS:

You have likely heard of A/B testing because it is a big part of the ability to optimize conversion. If you are new to the term, an A/B test allows you to segment groups into two cohorts to compare whether one variation (web page, product feature, etc.) performs better than the other.

CONTROL   VARIATION

25% CONVERSION   30% CONVERSION
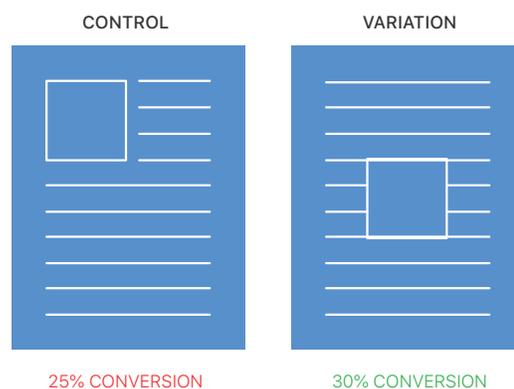
Of course, there are other more advanced types of testing such as multi-variate testing. There are plenty of resources available regarding testing, so this section will not cover this. The focus of this section is to cover the tools you need to conduct your testing.

I recommend using a tool like Optimizely. Optimizely allows you to run sophisticated tests in the UI - i.e. change the marketing pages or the product itself. While it's always best to have a designer/developer helping you, a tech-savvy person can setup and run tests on marketing pages and even the product itself. If you do not have the budget for Optimizely, Google offers a free testing tool called Google Optimize.

If all else fails, you can also use the "poor man's a/b test." The poor mans a/b test is essentially measuring the baseline, making the change, and measuring whether you improved over the baseline. This is not perfect, obviously, but you should be able to determine if you are making changes that are big enough to matter.

While both Optimizely and Google Optimize allow you to see conversion metrics in the tool itself, the ideal scenario is to integrate the testing tool with your analytics / BI tool. This will allow you to evaluate the performance of your variation vs. control against any number of metrics.

My favorite example of this relates to an experiment on product demos. We developed new demos that were featured on our product pages. The variation with the demo converted trial sign-ups by 50% compared to the old demo. What was more interesting; however, is that all the subsequent metrics (signup, activate/use the product) got incrementally better. In fact, product activation improved by 100%. I believe that the new demos made the user more committed to signing-up and using the product. This insight was only available because our testing tools were directly integrated into our analytics.

NURTURE

Outside of making changes in the UI, the other method of programmatically interjecting into the experience is to use in-app messaging or email nurture. By this, you can intervene in the experience to provide information such as support resources or documentation. You can also enable a user to directly communicate with sales, customer success, or support.

As you can imagine, this can be an incredibly powerful tool when used appropriately. The question, of course, is how you use nurture appropriately. Most people think about the happy path that is easy. The happy path means progressing a user along with the steps they are expected to take. The happy path is important; however, challenge yourself to think about both the happy path and the negative path where users drop off between each step.

HAPPY PATH
-USE IN-APP

VISIT WEBSITE	VIEW REGISTRATION	CREATE ACCOUNT	CONFIGURE AND SETUP PRODUCT (OPTIONAL)	USE PRODUCT	CONVERT TO PAID	CONTINUE USING / SPENDING

X   X   X   X   X   X   X

NEGATIVE PATH
-USE EMAIL
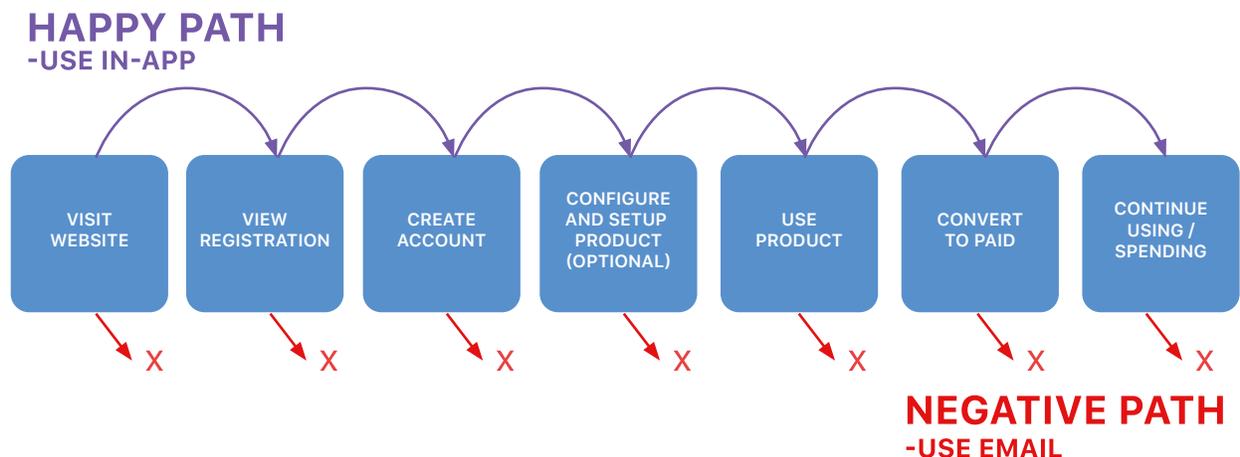
HAPPY PATH

The simple guidance is that you should provide limited (only critical) information in the happy path via in-app messaging. Critical pieces of information that will educate and progress. If you cannot simplify the UI, or provide this in the UI itself as informational bits, then you can use a variety of techniques:

 # In-app pop-ups / messaging with tips and helpful links

 # Allow users to interact with you directly via a chat mechanism

 # A guided tour during the first use to help users get started, configure, and setup product

NEGATIVE PATH

For the negative path, the most effective technique is email. You can use email to bring people back to the spot you lost them. For example, a user creates an account but does not configure and use the product. You can email the user a link to the configure section of your application along with documentation and a short instructional video. In my experience, the negative path emails (win-backs and bounce-backs) are the best mechanism to improve conversion rates by decreasing the drop-off rates.

UNDERSTANDING HEALTH OF THE BUSINESS

The growth team will not only need to understand what is happening with cohorts of users, but they will also need to understand the overall health of the business. This may include the full business / product or simply a target KPI for which they are responsible, such as daily active users, a conversion rate, etc.

The most common mistake that new teams make is too many metrics and too many dashboards. This causes a few problems:

It is almost impossible to derive any insight

People don't know what metrics to pay attention to vs. not

The users of the dashboards become overwhelmed and create their own reports or ignore the dashboard entirely

Therefore, the most important thing is the ability to condense your key metrics to a few small leading and lagging indicators, which help you quickly understand and diagnose health. You should aim to have only a small set of three to five metrics.

This sounds impossible, right? Well, take, for example, the human body. The human body is tremendously complex, yet nurses and doctors will triage the state of a patient in the ER based on a few simple things: pulse, temperature, blood pressure, oxygen saturation, respiratory rate, and pain. These few vital signs diagnose the severity of an issue and point doctors and nurses to where to focus next.

Similar to the concept of vital signs, you should have a small set of KPIs that allow you to easily monitor and diagnose where there are problems within your business and where you need to investigate further. The Pirate Metric Framework by Dave McClure can help you do this as it is loose enough that you can apply it to just about any business but rigid enough that it allows you to measure the key vital signs across the funnel.

ACQUISITION
USER FINDS YOU

ACTIVATION
USES YOUR PRODUCT FOR THE FIRST TIME

RETENTION
CONTINUES USING YOUR PRODUCT

REVENUE
PAYS FOR YOUR PRODUCT

REFERRAL
REFERS OTHERS USERS

As a starting point for your KPIs, pick a metric from each category and start to monitor and track this with your colleagues. You may make adjustments and/or add other metrics, but this simple and concise framework will allow you to escape the trap of too many metrics and dashboards. It will get you focused on the metrics that really matter.

Once you have selected your metrics using the framework, I would suggest you display them (if possible) using the month over month cumulative view. The month over month view allows you to watch the day-to-day trends and quickly understand how you are performing in the current month vs. the previous month. It also allows you to see how you are performing year over year. At a glance, this tells you whether you are growing or not.
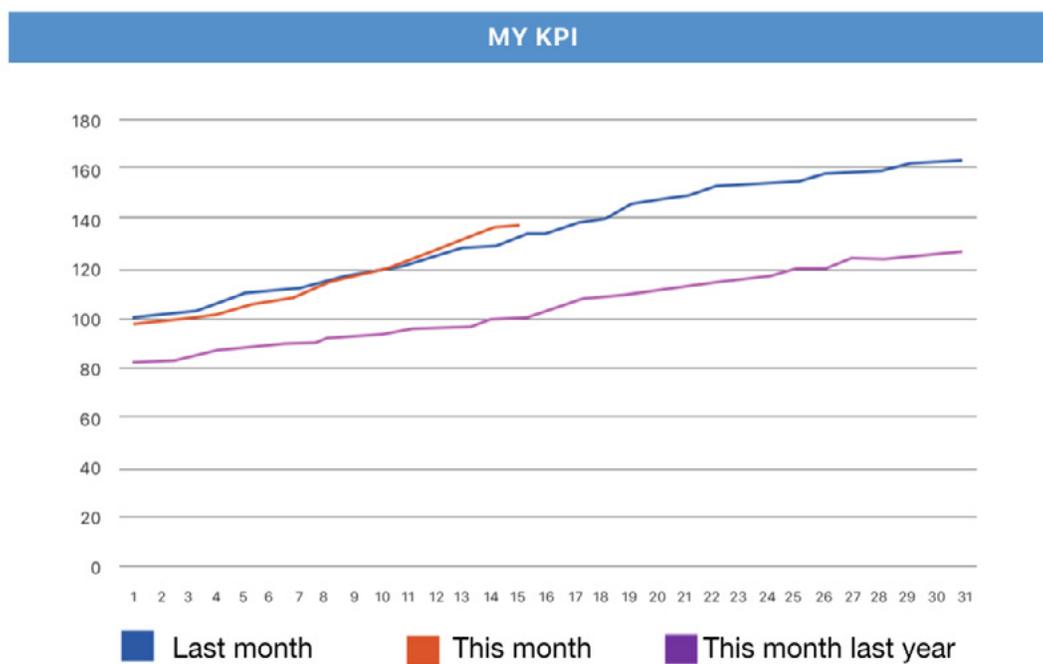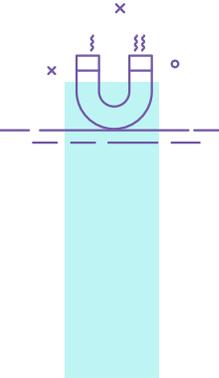
THE GROWTH STACK

If you have the luxury of building a suite of tools for your growth team, then I would recommend a general stack that looks like this:

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE	A/B TESTING	EMAIL / NURTURE	CRM	• • •

COHORT ANALYSIS / SEGMENTATION

DATA

AI MODELS / DATA SCIENCE
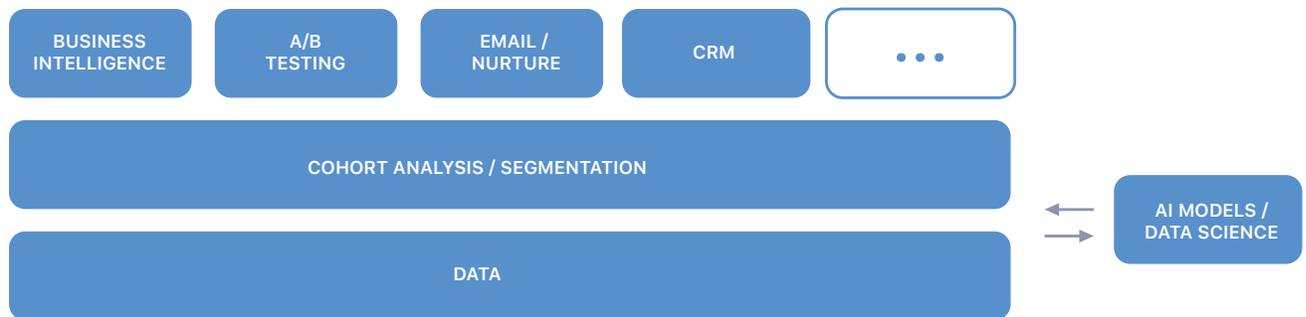
This is not a technical architecture but a conceptual view of how the team can work using the tools. At the data layer, you want information about users, campaigns, web data, products, and usage of the products.

Your growth team can segment users to get insights about usage, conversion, and more. Once you have segmented those users, you can then target them with tactics like A/B testing, email marketing, and even sending them different sales and/or customer success campaigns. After you have conducted an experiment against the cohort, you can use your business intelligence tools to analyze the results.

If you want to go for extra credit, the data science team can build a pipeline off to the side enabling them to do similar work, such as segment users, find insights, and then experiment with various segments/cohorts of users.

EVALUATE
RESULTS   TOOLS TO
                       ENGAGE USERS

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE	A/B TESTING	EMAIL / NURTURE	CRM	• • •

COHORT ANALYSIS / SEGMENTATION

UNDERSTAND AND
SEGMENT USERS

AI MODELS /
DATA SCIENCE

DATA
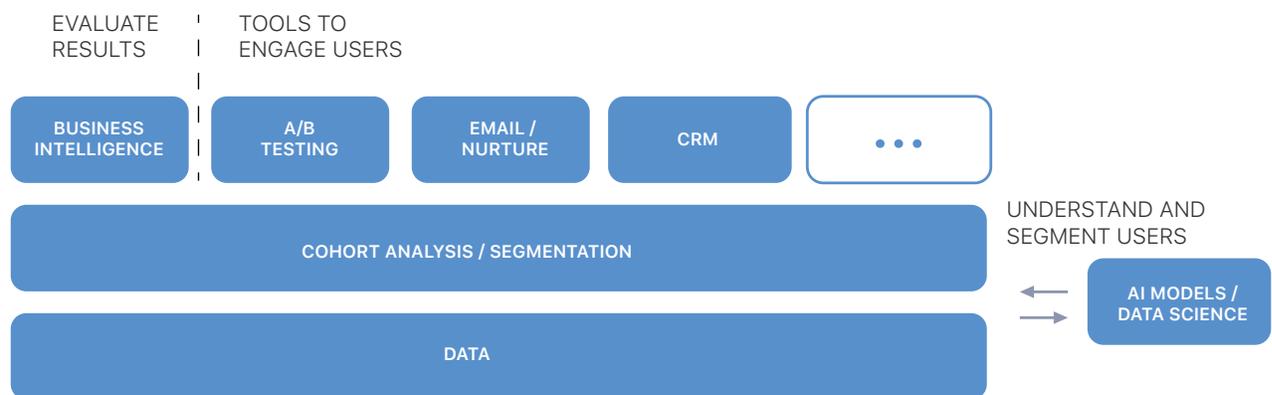
CHAPTER 5:
THE GROWTH PROCESS

ORGANIZING THE GROWTH PROCESS

The basic idea of the growth process is having a steady stream of experiments that are going to incrementally improve your metrics. To do this, you will implement an agile system in which you create a backlog of experiments, run weekly sprints whereby you are launching new experiments, tracking active experiments and sharing learnings through playbacks, and documenting the results.

	SPRINT 1	SPRINT 2	SPRINT 3	SPRINT 4

OPERATIONAL MODEL

TEAM REVIEW WEEKLY METRICS
KPIs, Progress against goals
(adjust priorities as needed)

WEEKLY COORDINATION
Marketing, Dev, Design, Product

REPORT MONTHLY
Metrics and Experiments

EXPERIMENTS

EXPERIMENTS RUNNING

**ANALYZE, PUBLISH, SHARE
COMPLETED EXPERIMENTS**

**PLAN & LAUNCH
NEXT EXPERIMENT**
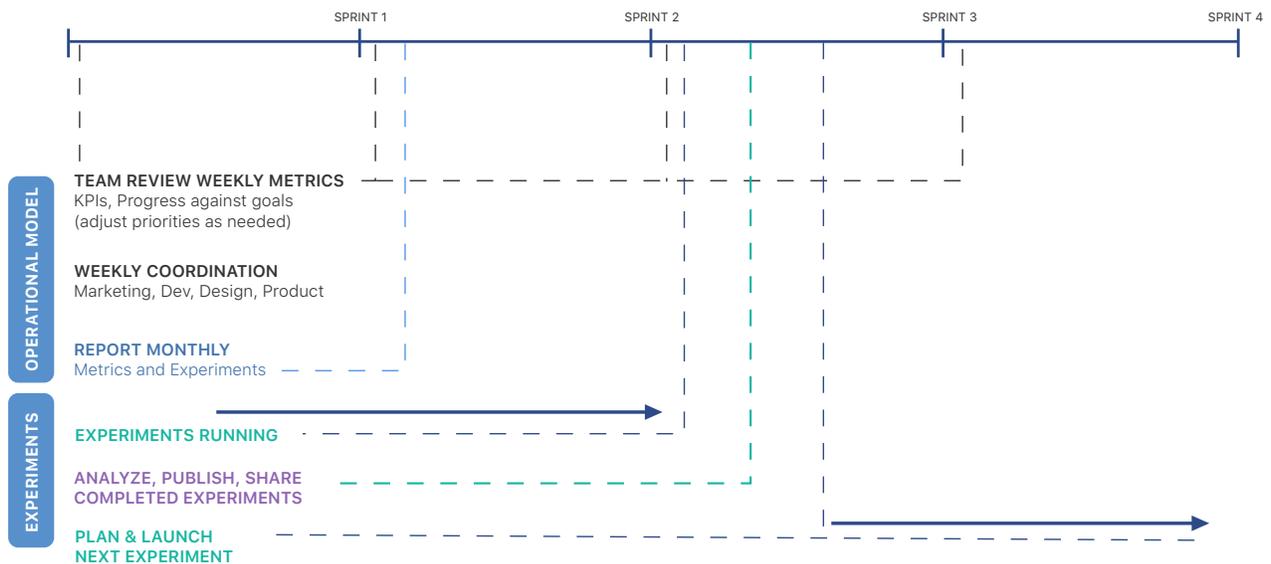
The process will have the following principles:

AGILE:

\# **Weekly sprints (for more iterations)**

\# **Review metrics weekly**

\# **Coordinate with stakeholders weekly. If you have the luxury of all sitting on the same team, this is all done in "sprint planning." If you work in a matrix organization, this allows you to connect with the people who need to help you get your experiments out the door without making your meeting excessively large.**

VELOCITY (LAUNCH X NUMBER OF EXPERIMENTS PER MONTH):

\# **You should have outcome metrics (e.g. improve new customer signup by x), but an activity-based metric helps to achieve a certain amount of velocity, which gives you a good mix of simple / complex improvements.**

\# **Always have some minimum experiments running. This depends on the type of business you are in and what you are optimizing.**

\# **Plan the next set of experiments in parallel.**

RETAIN LEARNING:

\# **Publish results so you have a history of "learning."**

\# **Monthly playbacks: what did you learn and what is next for a broader set of stakeholders.**

When you put all these together, you have a fast-acting team that is constantly learning and improving.
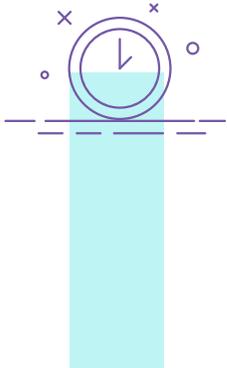
GETTING STARTED

With a firm understanding of the value of a growth team and the general process, the question is inevitably how to put it into practice. Let us now turn to get your team organized and running. The process is simple, it follows an agile methodology of "Sprint 0" to build your backlog and then continue to iterate.

The following shows your initial sprint schedule:

	SPRINT 0	SPRINT 1	SPRINT 2	SPRINT 3

TASKS

EVALUATION - PRE-REQUISITES

Software/Tools
- Product instrumented
- Testing tools (e.g. Optimizely)

Cross-functional team
- Form cross functional team with "leads" from required functions – Product Management, Marketing, Sales and Engineering

Executive Support
- Alignment on target KPI
- Support running of the experiments
- Commitment to attend end of sprint playback

SPRINT 0

Training on growth fundamentals / process

Deep Funnel Analysis
- Document the high-level journey map
- Funnel Analysis

Build the experiment backlog
- Generate a list of experiments to improve conversions

Plan Sprint 1
- Prioritize the experiment backlog
- Agree on first 2 experiments (or more)

SPRINT 1

Launch first experiments
- Launch the first set of experiments

Monitor
- Monitor progress of running experiment

Plan
- Analyze user behavior, plan next set of experiments

Playback
- Gather team (including sponsoring executives) to show the funnel analysis, the experiment, the results and the next experiment in the backlog

SPRINT 2

Launch next experiments
- Note: experiments may take time to run so "sprint 2" may be too soon

Integrate
- Start to Integrate experiment "issues" into typical agile process – backlog grooming, playbacks

To that end, you'll need to build your experiment backlog and then establish an ongoing growth process.

Sprint 0

1. Select a process / metric you want to improve
2. Demo the experience as a user – and document it, visually
3. Get the data for each stage of the process – best effort
4. Build your experiment backlog
5. Prioritize high-impact, easy to execute first

Sprint 1 - n

6. Start experimenting, repeat (build, measure, learn)
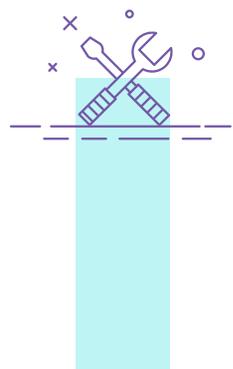
SPRINT 0 - BUILD YOUR EXPERIMENT BACKLOG

STEP 1: SELECT A PROCESS / METRICYOU WANT TO IMPROVE

This is somewhat self-explanatory, but you will want to pick a target metric such as user acquisition, paid conversion, or retention. Your target metric will vary based on the needs of the business. Let the pirate metrics be your guide.

As you select your target metric, consider the following:

\# **The most powerful lever to grow a recurring revenue business is, of course, revenue churn. The issue; however, is that it is likely the hardest metric to affect and it will take the longest to move / measure - especially compared to another metric like user acquisition. As a growth leader, you must balance the needs of "Growth" of the business with the ability to get the team rallied around a number and starting to see progress. If your team is brand new, focus on a metric that is meaningful but also one that you can start to affect in the first thirty to sixty days. This will motivate the team.**

\# **A common mistake that teams make is trying to take on too many metrics at the same time. As your team is forming, do not target too many metrics. Instead, focus on a single metric that you can start to meaningfully improve. This focus will allow you to start to gain learning based on tactics that work and tactics that do not work, and it will also allow you to start improving the number. Again, this will be a motivating factor. Then, after the team starts to solidify and show progress in improving this metric, you can start adding other focus metrics into the mix.**

STEP 2: DEMO THE EXPERIENCE AS AU SER – AND DOCUMENT IT, VISUALLY

Assuming you are improving an actual product, the next step is to go through the software product as a user would experience it and document each step in a visual tool.

Now, if you are fortunate to have user research professionals in the organization and if you have the luxury of time, you should commission a study through the user research team. The user research team can guide you, but the basic approach is to recruit new users to go through the product. The research team will give the user that task that relates to the metric you are trying to improve. This will allow you to see what real users are actually doing.

For example, if you are focusing on user acquisition and activation, you will give them a scenario such as, "You are evaluating products that do [insert your product focus here]. Your task is to research [your product here] as a possible option. You will sign up for the product, configure it, and use it for the first time." The user will go through the process with minimal prompting from you or the research team. You will immediately start to see areas that are strong and areas that need improvement. This will give you a rich set of qualitative understanding as a basis for your growth work.

Now, if you do not have user research professionals in your organization, you can do the study on your own. The output of this step is a short summary of some of the learnings: things you do well, things you do not, and ideas of things you can do to improve the experience.

The next step is to go through the product and document, visually, the flow that you are going to improve. This must be a shared resource for the team.

You may say, "We know the product, and we do not need to do this." Don't skip this step. This step is important, particularly in larger organizations, because people tend to get too far removed from using the actual product. They talk a lot about the product, the business, and the users but never actually use it. Watching real users and documenting the product yourself helps to align everyone around what the user is truly doing with the actual product.

When you are done, the output should look something like this

| GOOGLE SEARCH | WEB PAGE | REGISTRATION PAGE | ACTIVATE ACCOUNT | LOGIN (DASHBOARD) |

NOTE, THE IMAGES ABOVE ARE FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES, YOUR OUTPUT WILL BE SCREENSHOTS OF THE ACTUAL PRODUCT

STEP 3: GET THE DATA FOR EACH STAGE OF THE PROCESS

After you have documented the steps of the process you are trying to improve, the next step is to try to build a funnel to show the drop off at each stage of the process. A histogram quickly shows the scope of the drop off at each stage, which will help you to identify where to focus.
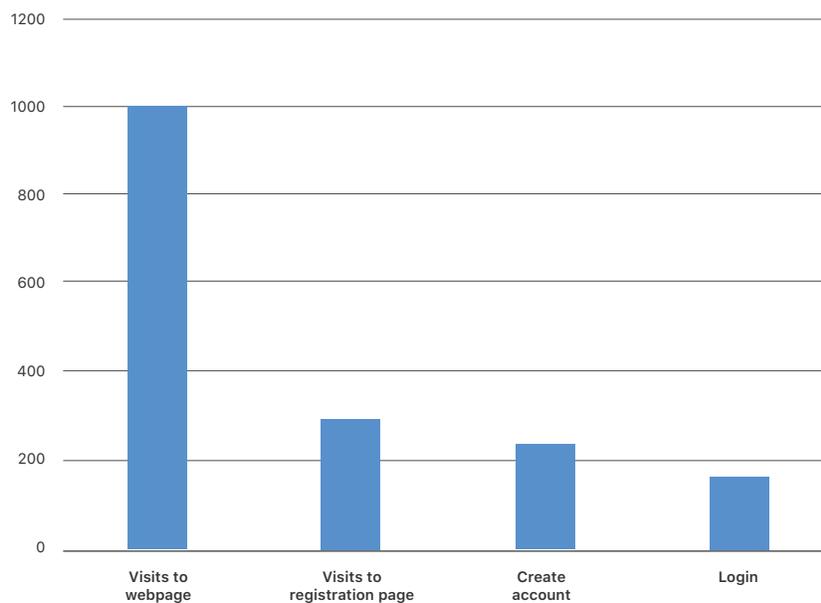
STEP 4: BUILD YOUR EXPERIMENT BACKLOG

After documenting the process and gathering the data, you will likely already have a handful of ideas for things you want to do to improve your metric. Start to lay those ideas over the top of the histogram, it will start to paint the picture of the ideas that you have and where you can make the best impact.
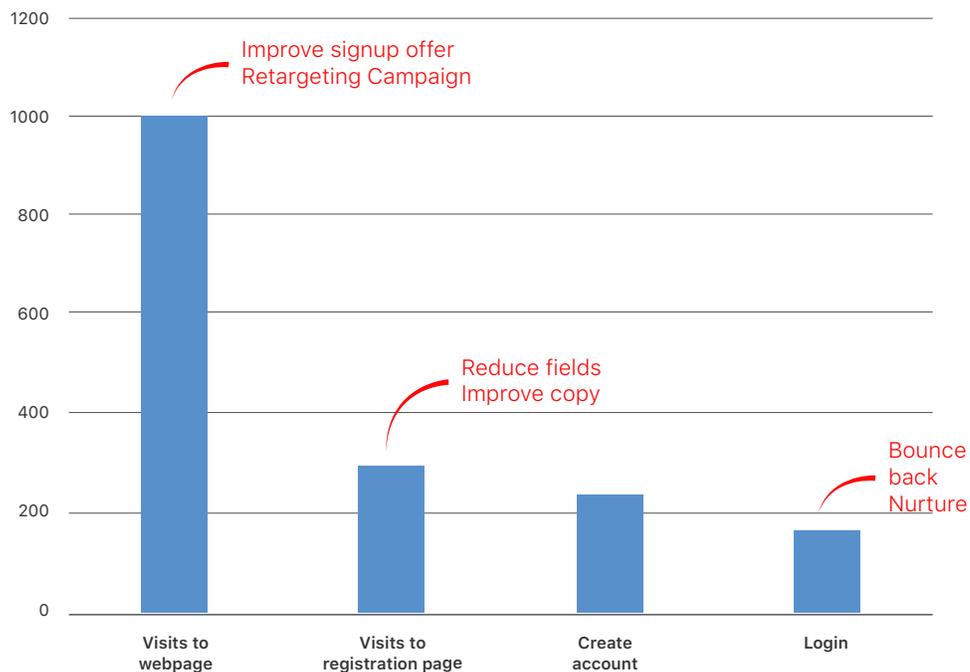
You will want to log your experiment ideas into a tool such as GitHub, Trello or Northstar.

Write up your ideas with the following details:

PROBLEM
An insight regarding a problem area based on qualitative or quantitative data. Example: The registration form only converts at 20%. We have found that 80% of the people who fail to complete the form stop at the phone number field.

SOLUTION (HYPOTHESIS)
This is what you think will happen. It is best if you can quantify the result, but it can be inefficient to create an entire business case for each action. Example: If we remove the phone number field, we can increase the conversion rate of the form from 20% to 40%.

EXPERIMENT
This is the design of the experiment. It is best to list as many details as possible. Where possible, include screenshots of the original and variations. Screenshots help to communicate the change and are more important for people who revisit the learning later, well after people have forgotten the exact specifics. Example: The experiment will show an original with all form fields. The variation will include all form fields but will remove the email address field. We will target this to 20% of the traffic. We will target it to all audiences because it does not require any type of translation.

METRIC
This is obviously the metric you want to improve. I typically suggest building a report or dashboard to show the metric before you launch the experiment. In some cases, you may believe that you can measure the experiment as intended only to find that there are some nuances which prevent you from measuring it in the way you intend. If you create the report at the outset, before you launch the experiment, you will be sure you can measure it appropriately. If not, you can adjust the design / metric to ensure you can measure what you intend to measure.

STEP 5: PRIORITIZE

Since you cannot tackle all these ideas at the same time, the next step is
to prioritize. Group your ideas against the dimension of low to high impact.
The impact is measured by the ability to improve the key metric. Then shift
them around based on easy and hard to execute with the keys here being
time, resources and complexity. The easier tasks are obviously simple, fast,
and have resources, whereas the harder tasks are some combination of
complex, time-consuming, and may or may not have resources to complete.
Before you check this step off, agree on the experiments that you intend to
launch as part of your first sprint.

PRIORITIZATION GRID
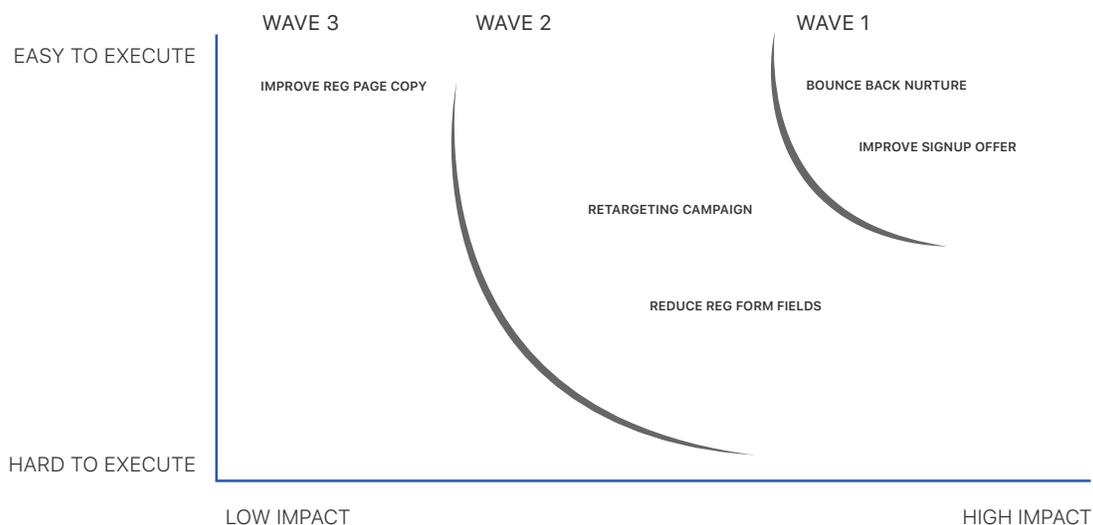
WAVE 3   WAVE 2   WAVE 1

EASY TO EXECUTE

IMPROVE REG PAGE COPY   BOUNCE BACK NURTURE

                                                        IMPROVE SIGNUP OFFER

                        RETARGETING CAMPAIGN

                        REDUCE REG FORM FIELDS

HARD TO EXECUTE

LOW IMPACT   HIGH IMPACT

CHAPTER 6:
THE GROWTH JAM

T he getting started process outlined earlier is good for teams who are starting fresh; however, it's not always practical to start fresh. In some cases, you are working within an established team and you need another mechanism to generate new ideas to spur growth – whether it be holistic growth or a focused objective.

The process to use in this case is the Growth Jam. The Growth Jam is a one or two hours focused brainstorming session which will generate an idea backlog and prioritize the top ideas generated in the session. What is more, the Growth Jam is fun for everyone who participates. Sometimes we spend too much time in the day-to-day and do not get enough time to focus on growing the business.
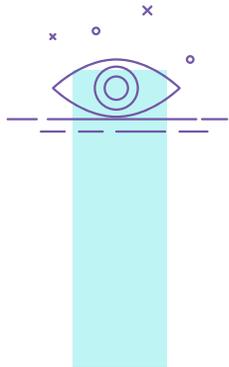
OVERVIEW

Running the session is easy. There are three main parts to cover: framing, agenda, and the brainstorm session modules. Below is a high-level template, each will be described in further detail.

Framing

Objective
What problem are we trying to solve?

Constraints
What are the constraints upon the objective?

Assets and Resources that we can leverage
What assets and resources can we use?

Agenda:
A one or two-hour agenda, with the outcome focused on two to three executable ideas and some refinement of the idea.

Brainstorm Template

Idea: [headline of idea]
- Idea Owner: [name]
- Description: [one to two sentence elevator pitch of idea - include data points, if you have them]
- T-shirt time to implement: [use one of the following: one to three weeks; 1 mo; 3m+]
- T-shirt size revenue estimate: [use one of the following: 100k; 500k; 1m; 2m+]

Brainstorm

1. IDEAS
- Brainstorm ideas (silent)
- Short discussion/pitch of the ideas, questions/clarifications

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FRAMING

Framing the Growth Jam should be done in advance of the meeting, and it is perhaps the most important part of the entire exercise. In the framing, you will want to set an extremely targeted objective, include the target KPI you are trying to improve as well as the time frame in which you want to improve it. A common mistake in brainstorming is that people do not consider the boundaries of what they can or cannot achieve; therefore, you will also include within which parameters your work will need to be constrained. Finally, as a growth leader, you should have a good view of many of the opportunities that some of your peers operating in different silos may not see. To start the brainstorming, give them a list of some of the assets and resources that the team can leverage in pursuit of executing the ideas.

It is important to note that people will come up with ideas that are outside of the boundaries of the frame, which is acceptable; however, during the voting session, which will be covered shortly, you will want to direct people to vote on the ideas that meet the targeted objective within the constraints you have provided.

The following is an example of the framing:

Framing

Objective
What problem are we trying to solve?

Example: Generate a list of strategies and tactics we can launch in a < 1 mo timeframe that have the possibility of generating $500k in revenue by the end of the year.

Constraints
What are the constraints upon the objective?

Example:
- Leverage the "working team" - no new headcount
- No additional funds in advertising budget
- Need to be able to implement within 1 month max to start getting the benefit in the current quarter
- We may need to stop something else in favor of a new idea.

Assets and Resources that we can leverage

AGENDA

The agenda is straight-forward. The purpose is to move the meeting along through the session with the end-goal being to have a backlog of ideas and a prioritized list of ideas, which the team can execute.

The first half of the meeting is focused on brainstorming (diverge), and the second half is focused on refining the focus and solutioning (converge). During the first half, your job as a facilitator is to get the ideas on the table which is done silently. If participants start to present ideas, kindly advise them that you are not yet "problem-solving," and that the team is simply generating ideas and solutioning will follow later in the session.

During the second half of the session, your job is to get buy-in on the top ideas and then start to refine the idea – getting the key issues, blockers, and details on the table. You will likely not solve the entire idea in this one session. You are simply priming the pump as the smaller squads' form around each (top) idea.

There are two sample agendas below: a one-hour and a two-hour agenda. As the facilitator, you can adjust the duration of the meeting based on the amount of time available and the amount of discussion you want to have. More discussion is helpful in the brainstorming and refining the details. It is possible to run the session in one hour, but the best sessions are typically at least ninety minutes. This allows for good discussion, but it is not so long that the team loses patience.

Agenda
A 1 or 2-hour agenda, with the outcome focused on two to three executable ideas with some refinement

1 Hour Example Agenda:
- Intro
  - o 5 min - intro / context of the Growth Jam
- Ideas
  - o 10 min - brainstorm ideas (silent)
  - o 15 min – discussion of ideas, questions/clarification of ideas - not solutioning
- Top Ideas
  - o 5 min - up-vote, highest impact tactics/strategies (silent), select top three
  - o 5 min – filter-down, any disagreement on top ideas
- Implementation
  - o 20 min - refining idea, start drafting details/blockers to implement the recommendations

2 Hour Example Agenda:
- Intro
  - o 5 min - intro / context of the Growth Jam

FACILITATION

To run an effective Growth Jam, you must allow some time for pre-work. This is important in the creative process; however, during the session, there are three main sections of the collaboration document:

1. Ideas - brainstorm

2. Top executable ideas – agreement and buy-in from the team

3. Implementation - what needs to happen to do the selected ideas

PRE-WORK

It is important to call out a key aspect of facilitation – the pre-work. While the agenda appears to happen all in one session, there is plenty of research that shows that brainstorming is more effective when people have time to think on their own in advance of the brainstorming session, so you will want people to start generating and documenting their ideas in advance.

Therefore, prepare the Growth Jam framing and agenda and a virtual collaboration space in advance. We typically use a Box note or a Google Doc for collaboration. Send the agenda at least 24 hours in advance, if not 48 hours, and ask the team to start documenting their ideas before the meeting in the collaboration space. You will give them instructions on the framing and then the "template," (to be described later in this section) direct them where to post their ideas in advance. Some of the participants will not document ideas until the meeting, which is to be expected, so you will allow for some silent brainstorming time.

IDEAS

The Ideas part of the Growth Jam is focused on generating ideas and then voting as a team to filter up the top ideas.

GENERATING IDEAS

Before (pre-work) and during the ideas section (brainstorm), part of the Growth Jam participants will list the ideas that will help accomplish the objective. This part of the Growth Jam must be done in silence and preferably anonymously, this helps to minimize groupthink and reduces everyone selecting "the highest-ranking employees" idea.

You will direct participants to write their idea in a simple template (below).

Idea Template

Idea: [headline of idea]
- Idea Owner: [name]
- Description: [one to two sentence elevator pitch of idea – include data points, if you have them]

Most of the elements are straight-forward, but the two most-important items are the "time to implement" and "revenue size estimate." Note, revenue may not be the objective, in which case this is the impact on the target KPI.

For both of these items, focus on rough sizing. This will help them think through the impact, with some simple numbers, as well as the difficulty in execution. These are not hard estimates or a business case. Think of a t-shirt size or Fibonacci number for agile estimation - the goal is to quantify the idea against impact and execution, which will help during the voting process.

Depending on the number of participants in the session, you may want to limit the number of ideas that each person or function team can propose. For example, a Growth Jam with five people each contributing two ideas would generate ten ideas. This is an adequate number for discussion and voting. However, a Growth Jam with ten people each contributing two ideas will generate twenty. This is too many, and people will struggle to think about all the ideas to vote on the best ideas; therefore, it is best to limit each member to one idea.

DISCUSSION OF IDEAS

When everyone is done listing their ideas, the participants should have some time to read through all the ideas that have been generated. Inevitably there will be questions about ideas in the list. Allow participants to ask questions to help clarify the description and the logic around the sizing. Note, this is not a time for solutioning. The discussion should be focused on clarification. As the facilitator, you will find that participants will jump to solutioning. Redirect the focus back to clarification or move on to another question if the team goes too far into the details on one particular topic.

TOP IDEAS

The "Top Ideas" section covers two main topics: voting the best ideas up (filter-up), and agreement/disagreement with the selections (filter-down).

VOTING

During the voting section, direct the team to cast votes on their top ideas with each participant only receiving three votes, or whichever number is appropriate. Before they cast their votes, remind them to vote on the ideas that best-satisfy the objective while considering the constraints. They should not arbitrarily vote for the idea that they think is "the coolest idea."

This part of the session should also be done in silence and anonymously, if possible. Similar to brainstorming, this helps minimize groupthink and voting for the idea from "the highest-ranking employee" in the room.

When everyone is done casting their votes, count-up the totals and select the top three ideas, or whichever number of ideas you have the capacity to execute. Move these into a separate section of the document so that the team can focus the remainder of the session on these ideas.

FILTER-DOWN

It is not advisable to simply "proceed blindly" with the top-voted ideas. There may be reasons that the idea will not work, cannot be executed, or possibly someone on the team vehemently disagrees with the selected idea. Allow some time on the agenda to ask whether anyone strongly disagrees with the top-voted ideas. This "disagreement process" will surface any issues described earlier, and it will also help to enforce buy-in.

It is important to note that it is not required that everyone agrees with the ideas. Your team likely has some decision-making process whereby a decision must be made. Ultimately, everyone on the team should share their opinion as to whether they agree or not, but you must make a decision in the meeting as to which ideas will move forward with the entire team committing to support the go-forward decision.

IMPLEMENTATION

The final step of the Growth Jam is a discussion of the implementation details. You will not create an entire plan in this step. You want to get some of the broad brushstrokes of the plan. The reason for this part of the session is obvious - you want to make the plan actionable.

The other benefit is practical in that you have all the key stakeholders "in a room together" (virtual or physical). All too often, after the brainstorming is finished, people instinctively go back to problem solving within their silos. This slows down execution because information does not flow freely. You may also find decision-making is slowed. Refining the start of the plan together allows a cross-functional discussion of the issues as well as fast decision-making across silos.

For each of your top-voted ideas, start to generate the following information:

\# **Who leads the work - not an organization or a team, name of the person**

\# **Who do we need to help - add name(s) (Silent)**

\# **Blockers - any known blockers that stand in our way? (Discuss)**

\# **Important Details - add any important details to consider (Discuss)**

\# **What do we stop - is there something we should stop in order to support this idea (Discuss)**

\# **Tentative timeframe**

\# **It is important to note that teams can be making comments in silence in the collaboration document or verbally in the meeting.**

Oh, and by the way, when you get to the "important details" section, this is the place where the team can finally start to criticize and solution ideas, so let them at it. They have been dying to get to this part.

Finally, after refining the ideas, close the session and agree on a timeframe for when the team will get back together to review a final plan. If that is not necessary then decide on a timeframe for when the team will have the target launch date decided. A completed idea may look something like the following:

Implementation Idea Example:

Idea: Win-back campaign targeting cold leads, focused on X new product release and short-term introductory offer

- Idea Owner: Joe Smith

- Description: We get 200 leads every month, 160 of them do not typically convert, mostly due to lacking X feature that our competitor offers. Over the past 6 months, we've accumulated 960 leads. We could do a targeted introductory offer for the 960 leads to see if we can increase revenue in this quarter.

- T-shirt time to implement: One to three weeks

- T-shirt size revenue estimate: 100k MRR

- Who do we need to help – Jane in marketing, Bill in sales, and Josh in finance

- Blockers – Billing system does not yet support this
- Important Details
    o A short-term incentive may hurt profitability, need a price that allows the offer to be profitable

    o Billing systems do not allow one-time, short term discounts, need to find a way to support this

CHAPTER 7:
KEEP IT MOVING - THE ONGOING AGILE PROCESS

With your backlog now created, the goal is to launch your experiments and then begin the iterative, agile process to keep improving your metrics. Assuming you are working with part of an established marketing and product team, you will need to integrate your growth process into the established process. Pause before you jump into sprint one because there are a few simple changes to make to your existing agile process.

The good news is that these are incredibly lightweight:

1. Add experiment tasks as part of your sprint

2. Add a "Running" column to keep track of what is live

3. Capture and share learning (playbacks and archive)
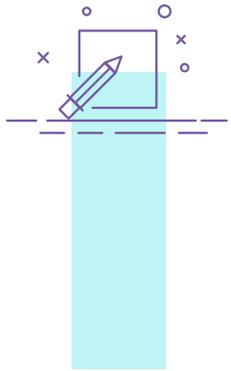
A BRIEF OVERVIEW ON AGILE

If you are new to Agile, you should take some time to read about the methodology to understand the principles and processes. This e-book will not go into great depth to describe Agile but will offer a brief primer.

The basic tenets which apply to the growth process in this e-book are as follows:

\# **Focus: You can complete more tasks by limiting your active work in progress.**

\# **Prioritization: you must prioritize your most important, highest impact work.**

\# **Adjust: adjust your tasks and priorities as you learn, or as new work is added.**

Agile is an iterative process where you work to complete work in a defined timeframe, a sprint. Sprints are typically one or two weeks but could be a month or longer, you can decide the duration of the sprint. During the sprint timeframe you will not start or take in any new work – of course, there can be exceptions. While sprints have a defined start and end, the sprinting process is continuous, your agile team will continue to deliver work over the months, years through a constant set of sprints.

The basic method of organizing your Agile sprint follows a process like this:

\# **Backlog: you will organize the work in your backlog before the start of your sprint. The backlog will contain the tasks, experiments in your case, that you intend to launch in the given sprint. The experiments will be prioritized with the most important at the top, the least important at the bottom. The reason for this prioritization is that it forces you to work on the most important tasks first. The goal is to complete all the tasks in the backlog in the current sprint and you will not typically pull in new work after the start of the sprint.**

\# **In Progress: Each task, experiment in your case, is assigned to an owner. The experiment owner will pull one experiment into "in progress". Note that agile teams will have a limit on the number of active experiments that can be assigned and in progress at any point in time, typically 1 – 3. The experiment owner will work to complete and launch the "in progress" experiments before he or she pulls in a new experiment into "in progress".**

\# **Complete: When the experiment is launched, it will move into a complete column – this e-book recommends adding a "running" column, which will be described later in this chapter.**

The preceding section loosely describes a sprint cycle. Your agile team will continue to loop through this process: prioritize the backlog, launch the experiments in the backlog during a sprint cycle, then repeat the process.

Finally, there are a series of agile ceremonies that govern the sprint process to enable your team to continuously deliver work. While this is not an exhaustive list, the most basic set of ceremonies are:

\# **Sprint planning: before the start of the sprint, the team will prioritize the backlog and define the work that will be completed during the sprint.**

\# **Daily Standup: daily, the team will meet together to discuss the work in progress. This is not a detailed status update, the team members will discuss: what did I complete yesterday, what will I work on today, is there anything that is blocking me from completing my task(s).**

\# **Retrospective / playback: at the end of the sprint, the team will meet to show the completed work – working demos are always welcome. The team will also share what worked well, and what didn't, in the spirit of continual process improvement.**

ADD EXPERIMENT TASKS AS PART OF YOUR SPRINT

Assuming you are working within an Agile construct, you likely have tasks for your different functions such as development tasks and/or design tasks.

Icebox	Backlog	In Progress	Testing	Complete
Export PDF	Implement billing UI	Design UI for billing	New Menu	Export CSV
				Design Export UI

■ Design ■ Dev

The first change is to add experiments as part of your sprint, which has two facets: creating experiment cards and then adding them to your existing sprint.

CREATE AN EXPERIMENT TASK

The experiment is at the core of your testing process. Fundamentally, the Experiment should capture the following:

 # TITLE
Create a simple title for the experiment

> **o E.g. "Bounce back nurture"**

 # INSIGHT
the insight from quantitative or qualitative (user research) that you have observed.

> **o E.g. "We have seen that 20% of users drop off after the account creation and never return to login to use the product"**

 # HYPOTHESIS
based on the insight, the behavior or metric you want to change based on the insight.

> **o E.g. "We can reduce the drop off between account creation to login from 20% to 10% by sending an email with how to get started content and login link to users who have created an account but never logged in."**

EXPERIMENT DESIGN
the basic framing of the experiment

o E.g. "We will send an email, targeting users who created
an account but haven't logged in after 48 hours.
The target will be English-only, based on the
web browser setting.

o Note: where possible, include screenshots or a visual
representation of the experiment

TARGET METRIC
the metric you wish to improve

o E.g. The conversion rate from account
creation to login

o Note: If possible, build the report and include a link to
the dashboard / report before you launch the
experiment. In some cases, you may not be able to
easily report upon the metric you wish to influence;
therefore, building the report before you launch the
experiment will guarantee that you can measure the
change from the experiment.

With a firm understanding of the components of a good experiment task,
you can now proceed to create your initial set of experiment tasks.

ADD EXPERIMENTS TO YOUR SPRINT

Now that you have created one, or multiple experiment tasks, you will add experiment tasks in your sprint along with your development and design tasks. This ensures you have visibility on the experiments the growth team is working on. It also integrates it into the development flow. You will likely need design and development resources to implement your experiments.

Icebox	Backlog	In Progress	Testing	Complete
Export PDF	Implement billing UI	Design UI for billing	New Menu	Export CSV
		Bounce-back nurture		Design Export UI
		New Sign-up offer		

Design Dev Experiment
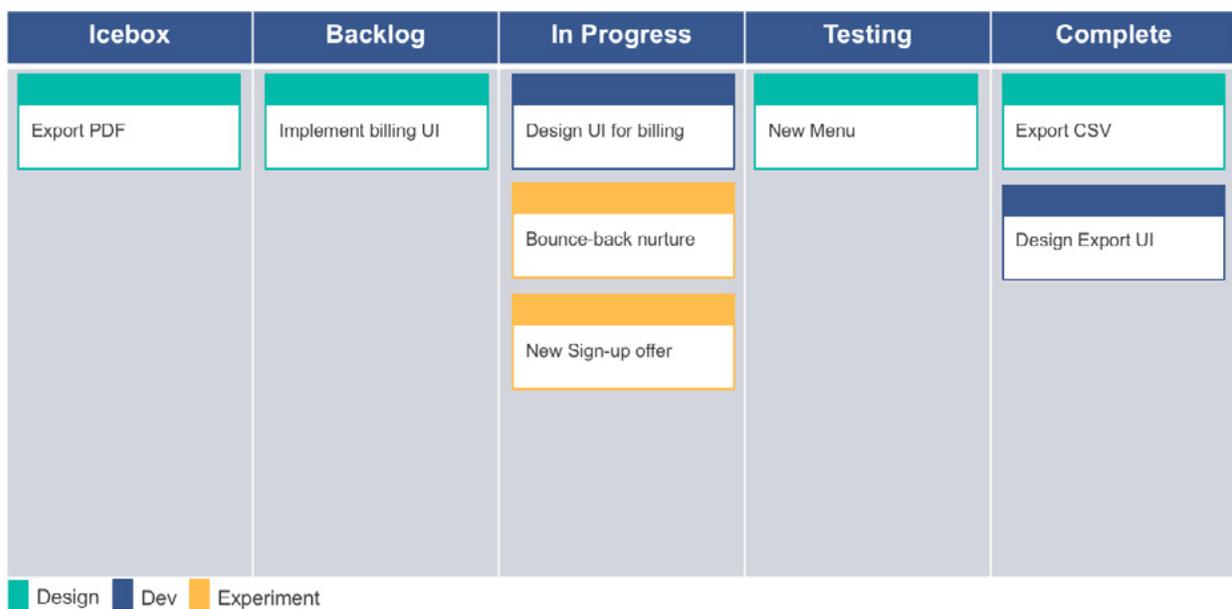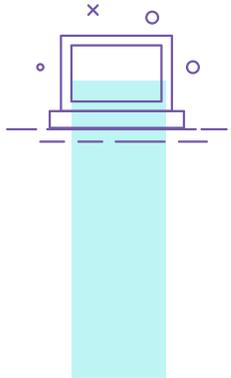
ADD A "RUNNING" COLUMN

The change you are making is to add a queue for experiments that are "live" (running). First, a quick primer on the purpose of the columns in the Kanban board:

\# **Icebox: For new ideas that need to be examined in more detail and will not be prioritized in the short-term.**

\# **Backlog: Items that have been planned for short-term but have not been started.**

\# **In progress: Items that are being worked on but have not been completed.**

\# **Testing: Items that need to be tested and/or reviewed before moving to complete.**

\# **Running Experiments: Items that have been built, launched, and are awaiting results.**

\# **Complete: Tasks that have been completed.**

The tasks here are experiments that are live, gathering data. There are a few benefits for this:

\# **It helps prevent launching experiments that will overlap or conflict with one another.**

\# **It helps remind you that you launched the experiment, you are gathering data, and you will need to analyze it before closing it out. It is easy to fall into the trap of saying, "We will run a test," and launch it and move on without having the rigor to analyze the result, which is where the learning truly happens in the test.**

Icebox	Backlog	In Progress	Testing	Running	Complete
Export PDF	Implement billing UI	Design UI for billing	New Menu	New Sign-up offer	Export CSV
		Bounce-back nurture			Design Export UI

■ Design ■ Dev ■ Experiment
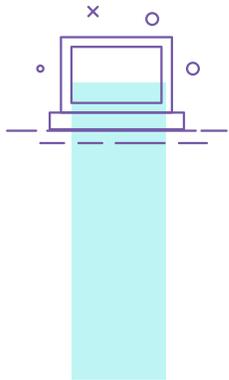
CAPTURE AND SHARE LEARNING

The final change relates to how you handle a completed experiment. When an experiment is completed, the experiment owner will analyze it and summarize whether or not it was successful against the stated hypothesis / goal.

People often make the mistake of keeping what they have learned to themselves. In the best case, what has been learned lives on in tribal knowledge. In the worst case, the person leaves the role and the learning is lost. You do not want this; you want to retain the learning so that everyone can benefit from it whether or not they conducted the experiment.

To retain the learning, you will need to do two simple things:

\# **Share the learning with the team: As part of your agile process, you likely have playbacks to demo the work that was completed in a sprint. After the experiment is completed and analyzed, the growth team should "playback" the experiment results, whether positive or negative, to the entire team during the sprint in which the analysis was conducted.**

\# **Retain learning in a tool or system: The best practice is to memorialize the learning in a wiki page or database where the team publishes the experiment results. Brevity is key. The best format is a simple description of the experiment (e.g. change the calls to action on the marketing page) and a summary of the result (e.g. the new call to action improved conversion 50%).**

Icebox	Backlog	In Progress	Testing	Running	Complete
Export PDF	Implement billing UI	Design UI for billing	New Menu		Export CSV
		Bounce-back nurture			Design Export UI
					New Sign-up offer

Design Dev Experiment
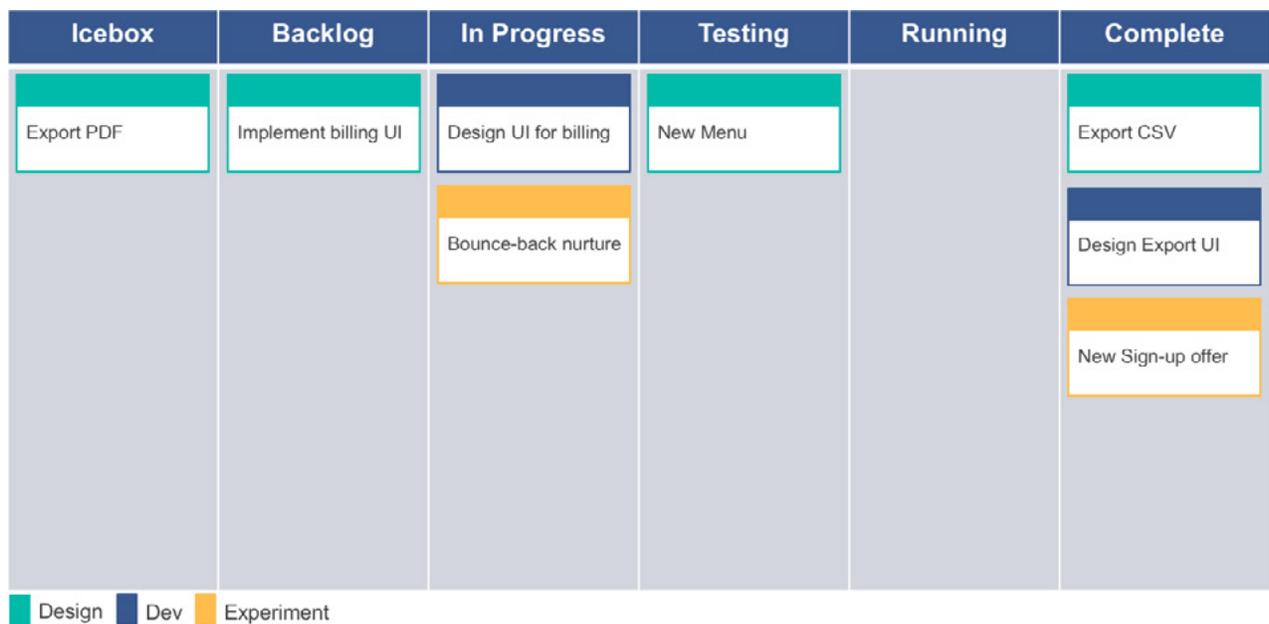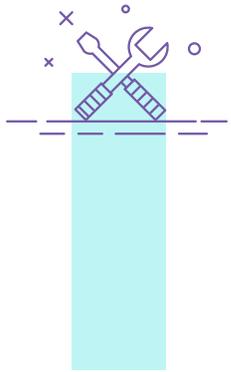
SPRINT 1-N: LAUNCH YOUR FIRST SET OF EXPERIMENTS, REPEAT

With your backlog created, and the agile process adjusted, you are now ready for sprint one. As you move through your sprints, your growth team will be focused on four basic tasks:

LAUNCH

As in any agile process, you will be focused on launching your first set of experiments.

MONITOR

In sprint one, you may not have any live experiments yet; however, as you move into your next sprints you will have experiments live. With your live experiments, you should go through, monitor, and review the results of the experiments to see how they are progressing.

You are looking to see whether they are complete (enough data to decide whether or not the experiment was a success), or if they need to continue to gather data.

PLAN

Based on what you are learning with your active experiments, or through an ad-hoc analysis of user behavior, you will start to draft and plan the next experiments that will fill the icebox and backlog in the coming sprints. Inevitably, you will need to prioritize the experiments you will launch, but throughout the sprints, you and your team will generate new ideas.

PLAYBACK

Playbacks were covered in the section above regarding capturing and sharing learning. The goal of the playback is to share and publish the results of completed experiments.

REPEAT

You will repeat the plan, launch, monitor, and playback for all of your subsequent growth sprints.

CHAPTER 8:
TOOLS - EXPERIMENTS
BY GROWTHHACKERS

The process discussed in Chapter 7, "The Ongoing Agile Process", makes no assumptions about the specific tools and systems that your growth team uses to manage day to day activity and collaboration. If you can select a new tool to manage your growth process then consider using Experiments.

Experiments was developed by GrowthHackers and has a variety of features that will help you generate new growth ideas, lead your growth team and process and even track and report on results. In the chapter that follows, you will learn how to use Experiments to manage your growth process and team.
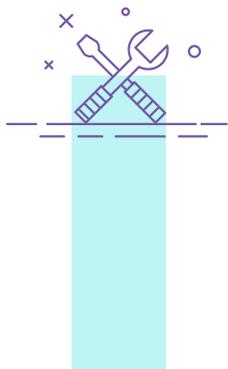
SETUP OBJECTIVES

A growth team is typically charged with improving one KPI or a small set of KPIs. Creating a three-layer-cadence of KPIs that gives you both the focus but also the flexibility to act upon where the biggest opportunity lies. The layers are: North Star Metric > Objectives > Ideas.

One of the many benefits of Experiments is that you can add your team's objective(s), KPI(s), directly into the tool. Before really getting started with Experiments, take the time to add your objectives into the tool. This will serve as the foundation for all of the ideas and experiments, not to mention the process, that your growth team will work upon. In the image below, you can see that the team has defined three common objectives.
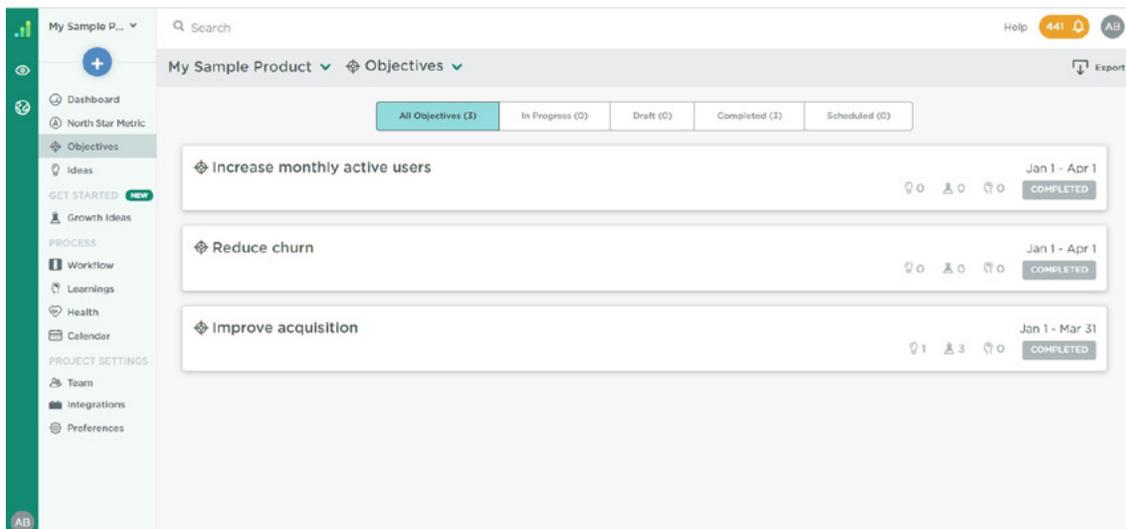
After objectives have been defined, you can map all ideas and experiments against that objective. As a growth leader, you can look at the specific objective to quickly understand the ideas, active experiments, and learnings against that target objective. In addition, if you track the improvements, you can track the progress against improving the KPI. In this regard, you can see the longitudinal impact of your efforts which is the true power of growth.
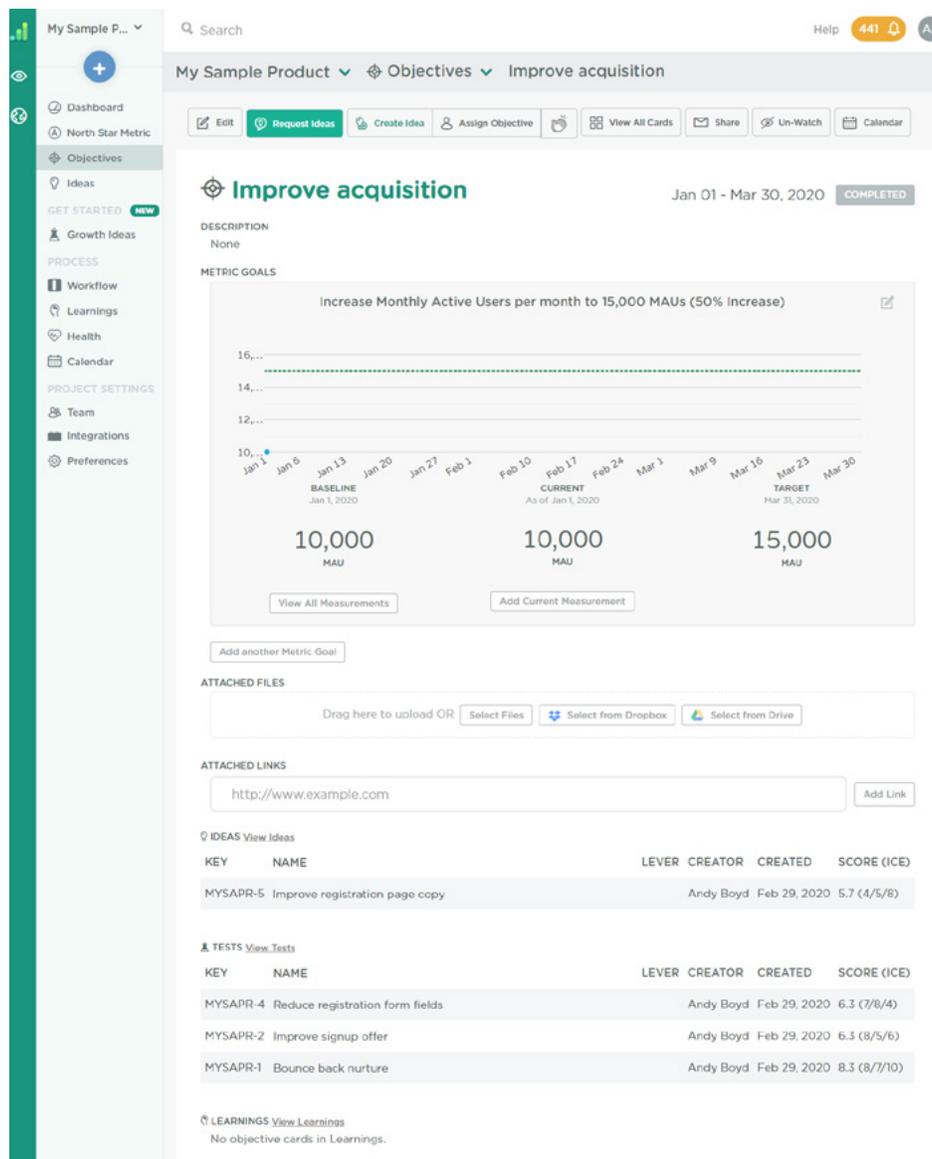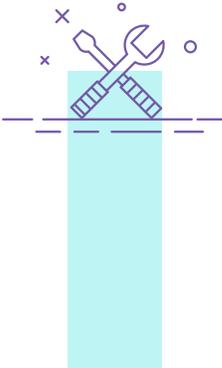
GROWTH IDEAS

Now that you have defined your objectives, the next step is to start to generate ideas on how to achieve your objectives. New growth teams often struggle with how and where to start. If you need help generating ideas, chapters 5 and 6 describe two processes that will help you generate your idea backlog.

If after reading chapters 5 and 6 you need additional inspiration, Experiments provides a great resource to generate ideas called Growth Ideas. In Growth Ideas, Experiments crowd-sources ideas from their sizable community of Growth Hackers. You can filter the ideas against multiple dimensions depending upon the nature of your specific challenge.

If you happen to find an idea that you like, you can easily import it into your project by either selecting the individual idea or multiple ideas. The ideas will then show up in the ideas section of your project.

EXPERIMENT CARDS

Now, with a backlog full of ideas, you have a new problem, how to organize your ideas. Experiments provides a mechanism for this in the Ideas section; however, before we jump to Ideas, let us take a brief segue into experiment cards. At the most granular level, the experiment card is the singular idea, it is the collection of experiments that ultimately drive the process and related improvements.

In chapter 5, in the section on organizing the growth process, you learned the basics of what content to include when creating a good experiment. To reiterate, the core components are as follows:

\# **Title: Create a simple title for the experiment**

\# **Insight: the insight from quantitative or qualitative (user research) that you have observed.**

\# **Hypothesis: based on the insight, the behavior or metric you want to change based on the insight.**

\# **Experiment Design: the basic framing of the experiment**

\# **Target Metric: the metric you wish to improve**

Experiments will allow you to define other facets of the experiment, add the following items which will be useful in managing your process and reporting:

ICE SCORE

ICE score stands for Impact, Confident, and Ease of Execution. This e-book will not go into great detail on ICE score, you can read more about ICE at Growthhackers.com. In short, the ICE score is as follows:

1. Impact – Impact on the target metric / KPI

2. Confidence – Confidence you will achieve the expected result

3. Ease – Ease of implementation

The ICE score allows you to rate the ideas for the purposes of prioritization. In a small team, the prioritization discussion can be relatively easy; however, prioritization can be more difficult when there are many ideas to consider. This tends to happen when working in a larger team with multiple stakeholders who are submitting ideas. This is where the ICE score can be particularly helpful.

OBJECTIVES

You have previously learned about Objectives; Objectives are the higher-level goal of what you are trying to improve. As described above, growing the business against a defined set of KPIs is one of the core functions of a growth team. Your team likely has a primary objective – or, a small set of key objectives – such as increasing signups, increasing monthly active users, decreasing retention, etc. Map your experiment to the specific objective you are trying to affect.
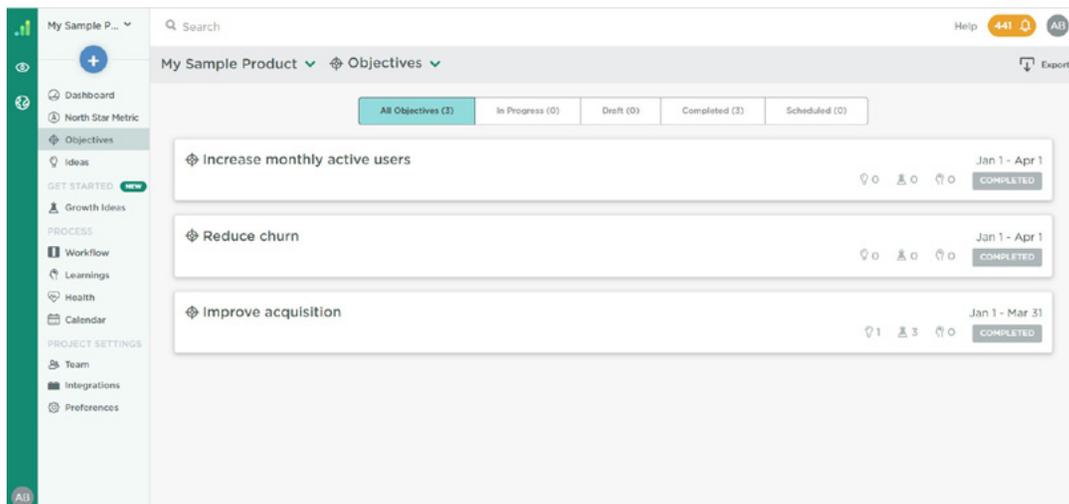
COMMENTS

Comments are a discussion from the team about the experiment. For anyone familiar with modern agile tools, the comment function has become an indispensable mechanism for collaborating "outside of the meeting". The growth team can leverage the comment features to ask questions, make progress, etc on the experiment outside of the meeting – with all the detail retained for future use.

ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS

At this point, you understand what makes a good experiment card and you should also have a list of ideas, it is now time to turn to organize those ideas and experiments. The ideas section in Experiments will help you organize your ideas, be sure to enter all of your ideas into the tool taking time to assign an ICE score for easy prioritization.

A good growth team will likely work with many stakeholders and those stakeholders will always have their own ideas – or, even if they don't have ideas, they would like to contribute to the process. Another benefit of Experiments is that it allows you to collaborate with your stakeholders' ideas in two ways:

Contribute ideas: Stakeholders can contribute their ideas directly into Experiments. You can also use the tool to directly solicit ideas from stakeholders. Their ideas will obviously show up in your project.
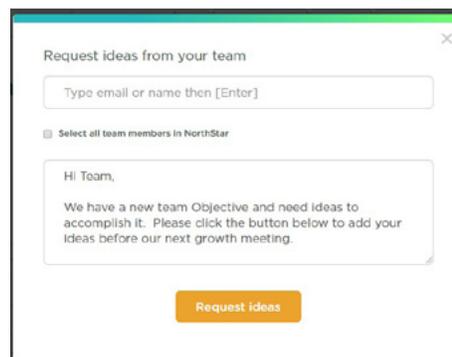
Vote on ideas: On each idea card, you will see the "clap" icon. The clap feature allows anyone to vote for ideas, providing a numerical score for the most "claps". If your team and your stakeholders are voting regularly for ideas, you can then use the clap feature as a filtering mechanism to bubble the "best" (based on votes, anyways) ideas to the top of your list of considerations.
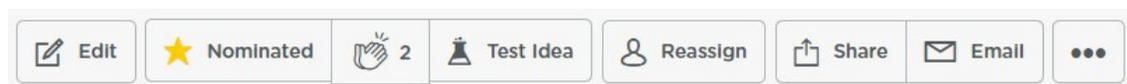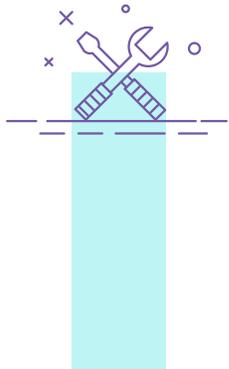
MANAGING THE GROWTH PROCESS

In Chapter 7, you learned about the basic sprint process and how to structure your Kanban board. Using Experiments, the same principles apply:

Focus: You can complete more tasks by limiting your active work in progress.

Prioritization: you must prioritize your most important, highest impact work.

Adjust: adjust your tasks and priorities as you learn, or as new work is added.

Sprints: a short timeframe, typically one or two weeks, in which you will complete a defined set of work. During the sprint timeframe you will not start or take in any new work – of course, there can be exceptions.

The basic agile process described in Chapter 7 also applies in Experiments: prioritize your backlog, launch the experiments from the backlog in the current sprint and repeat. The structure of the Kanban board uses slightly different column headings than what was previously described, below is a description of how the Experiment column headings map to the process described earlier.

\# **Up Next = this is the "backlog", the prioritized list of experiments for the current sprint**

\# **In Progress = in progress is the same, it is the Experiments that the team is actively working on**

\# **Ready to Analyze = this is the "running" column. Periodically check the experiments here to see if they are conclusive before moving to the Learning / playback phase**

CAPTURE AND SHARE LEARNING

As previously mentioned, growth teams often make the mistake of keeping what they have learned to themselves. In the best case, what has been learned lives on in tribal knowledge. In the worst case, the person leaves the role and the learning is lost. You do not want this. As a growth leader, you want to retain the learning so that everyone in the organization can benefit from it whether or not they conducted the experiment.

To retain the learning, you will need to do two simple things:

\# **Share the learning with the team: As part of your agile process, you likely have playbacks to demo the work that was completed in a sprint. After the experiment is completed and analyzed, the growth team should "playback" (share) the experiment results, whether positive or negative, to the entire team during the sprint in which the analysis was conducted.**

\# **Retain learning in a tool or system: The best practice is to memorialize the learning in a wiki page or database where the team publishes the experiment results. Brevity is key. The best format is a simple description of the experiment (e.g. change the calls to action on the marketing page) and a summary of the result (e.g. the new call to action improved conversion 50%).**

The Experiments tool simplifies this process of institutionalizing learning. When an experiment is complete - after you have analyzed the performance and made a final decision - you can add the test results and move it into the "learning" phase. This will move the card into the learning view, forever memorializing the result for the team and for anyone else who wants to read about the experiment.
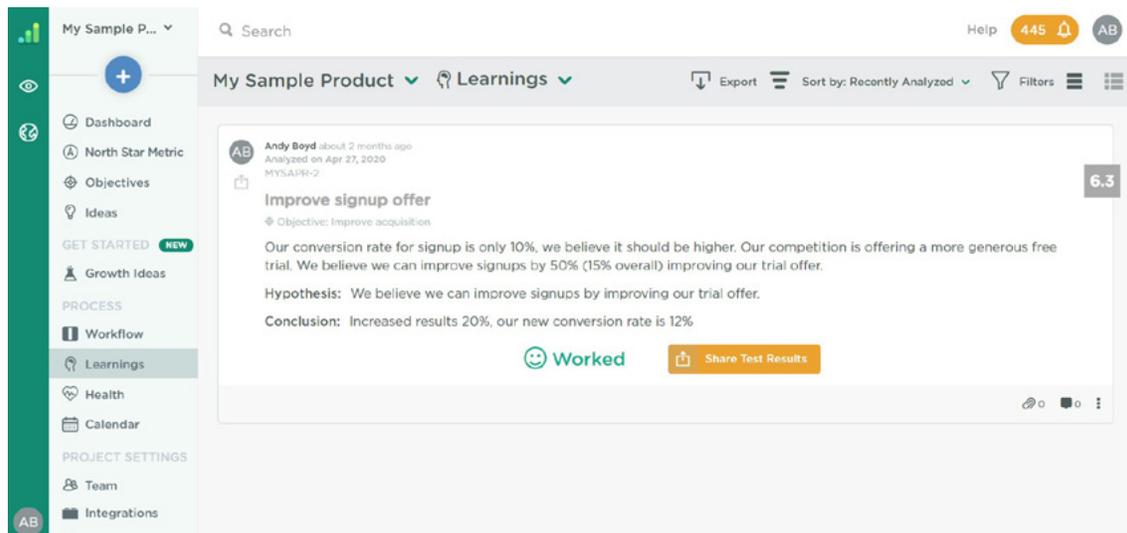
As you have learned, Experiments allows you to add additional information to your experiments such as objectives. This additional data can be beneficial to your team and organization in the learnings view. Using the advanced search, you can filter learnings based on the additional pieces of metadata. This will allow you to understand specific tactics that have worked, or not, against whatever dimension you are trying to better understand versus sorting through the entire learning database. For example, imagine your team is charged with improving retention, Experiments allows you to filter on the retention dimension and see all previous experiments – positive or negative – which will help you to quickly learn what has and has not worked.
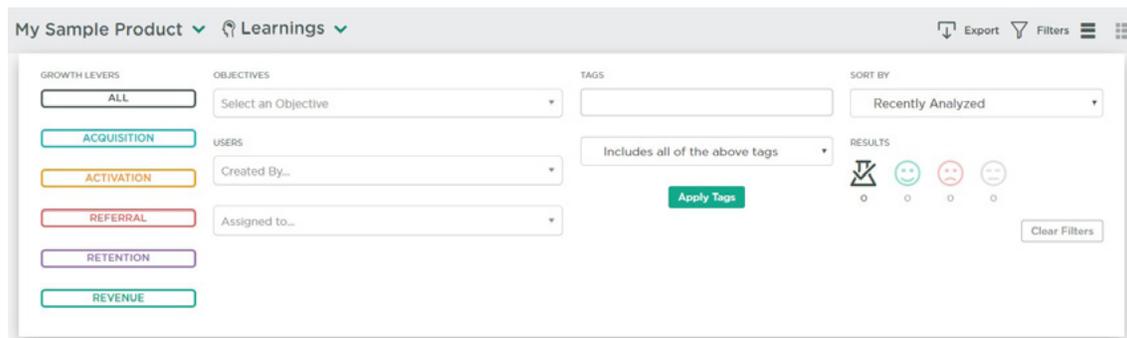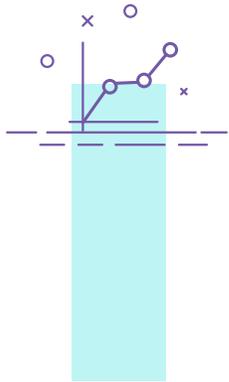
GROWTH MEETINGS

Chapter 7 describes the basic agile meetings as it relates your growth process, if you skipped the chapter, it described the basic agile ceremonies:

 # Sprint planning: before the start of the sprint, the team will prioritize the backlog and define the work that will be completed during the sprint.

 # Daily Standup: daily, the team will meet together to discuss the work in progress. This is not a detailed status update, the team members will discuss: what did I complete yesterday, what will I work on today, is there anything that is blocking me from completing my task(s).

 # Retrospective / playback: at the end of the sprint, the team will meet to show the completed work – working demos are always welcome. The team will also share what worked well, and what didn't, in the spirit of continual process improvement.

While we have briefly covered the sprint process, we have not discussed the Growth meeting. If you are following an agile methodology, the Growth Meeting is your sprint planning meeting. Experiments provides a feature to manage your growth meetings, aptly named "Growth Meetings". The growth meeting should have a basic agenda as follows:

Dashboard: metrics / achievement of objectives

Active experiments

Sprint planning

While the agenda topics are quite straight-forward, the remainder of the chapter will cover how Experiments can help you lead these topics.

DASHBOARD

As discussed throughout this e-book, your growth team is likely charged with achieving an objective with some set of target metrics. If you are using Objectives, you can periodically enter the progress that your team is making against that objective. This allows you to track progress over time but it is also useful to keep your team focused on your primary goals as well as the actions that will make the most impact.
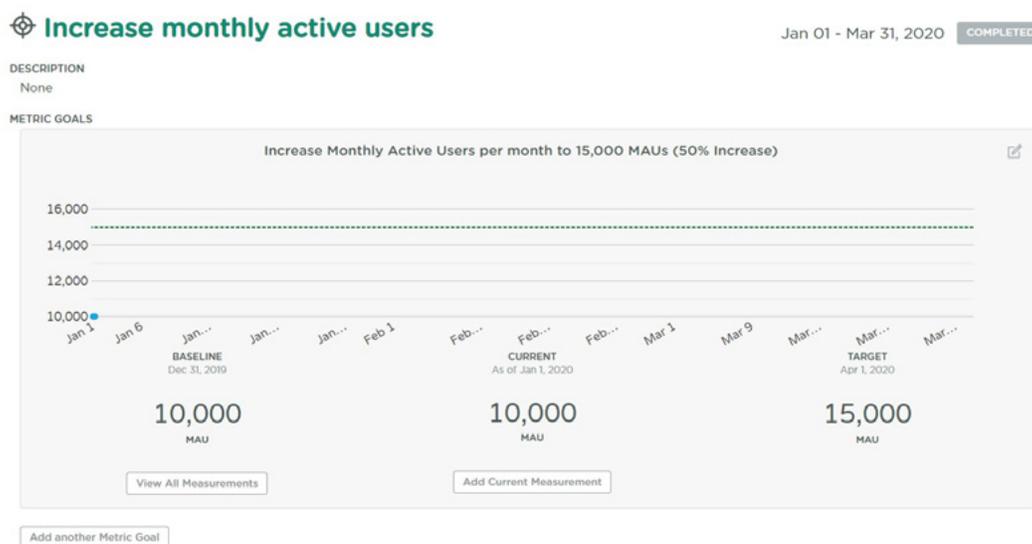
At the outset of the meeting, look at the dashboard as a team to understand where you are in relation to achieving that metric and to develop a growth culture inside your organization. This will ensure everyone on the team understands where you are with the goal and provides valuable context before planning your next set of tasks.
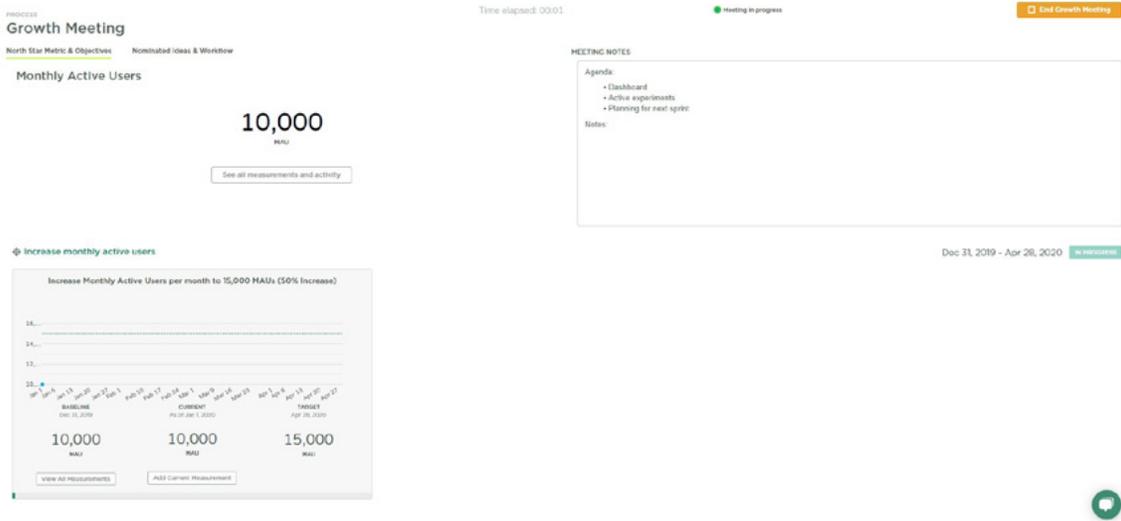
ACTIVE EXPERIMENTS

Your growth team will always have some set of experiments running. Before you plan your next tasks, quickly discuss the experiments in the active queue. This is not a detailed status update, it is a short discussion on what you are seeing in the data as well as how close the experiments are to completion – completion in terms of having the ability to make a conclusive "it worked" or "it did not work" decision.
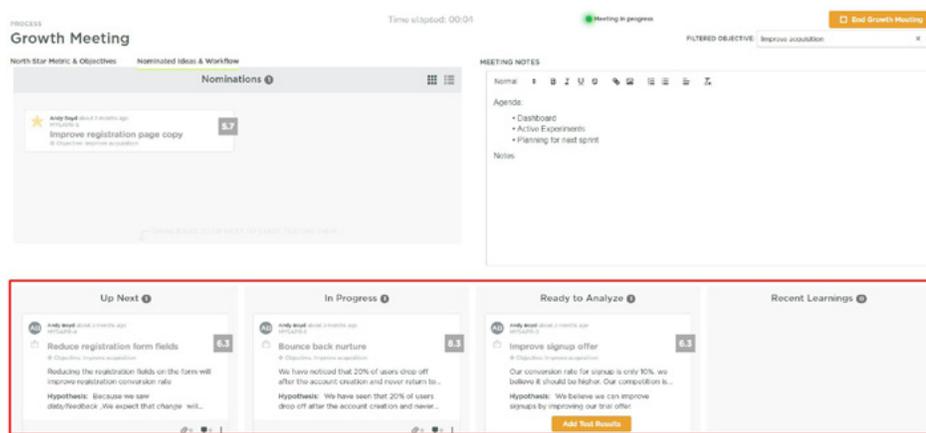

This discussion will help you understand whether you are blocked in a particular experiment. For example, you should not plan to work on and launch a new experiment on the "signup form" if you have an active experiment running there. The discussion will also help you adjust your priorities for the next sprint. For example, if changes on a marketing page are not yielding much improvement, your team may be better served to focus on a different part of the funnel to keep making progress on your objective.

SPRINT PLAN

The last part of the agenda is the sprint planning, which is selecting the next set of experiments to move forward. While this has not yet been discussed, Experiments allows you to nominate ideas, in the Ideas interface, by clicking on the "star" icon on each idea card. Nominated ideas will be shown in the Nominations sections, these are the ideas for consideration in the next sprint.

If you are light on new ideas, you can go back to the Ideas section of Experiments and find new ideas. Click on the star icon to nominate the idea to move the "best" ideas into the nomination queue.
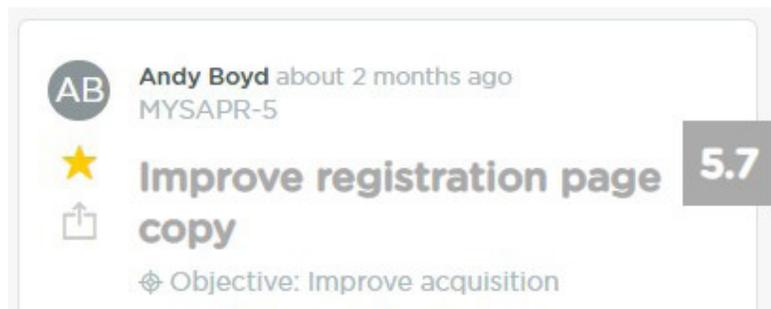
This concludes the overview of the Experiments tool. Experiments provides more features than what have been covered in this chapter. As a growth leader, it is your job to maximize the performance of your team – and Experiments is a tool that will enable you to do this effectively - so take some time to explore the tool further and learn more about the features that can improve the effectiveness of your team.
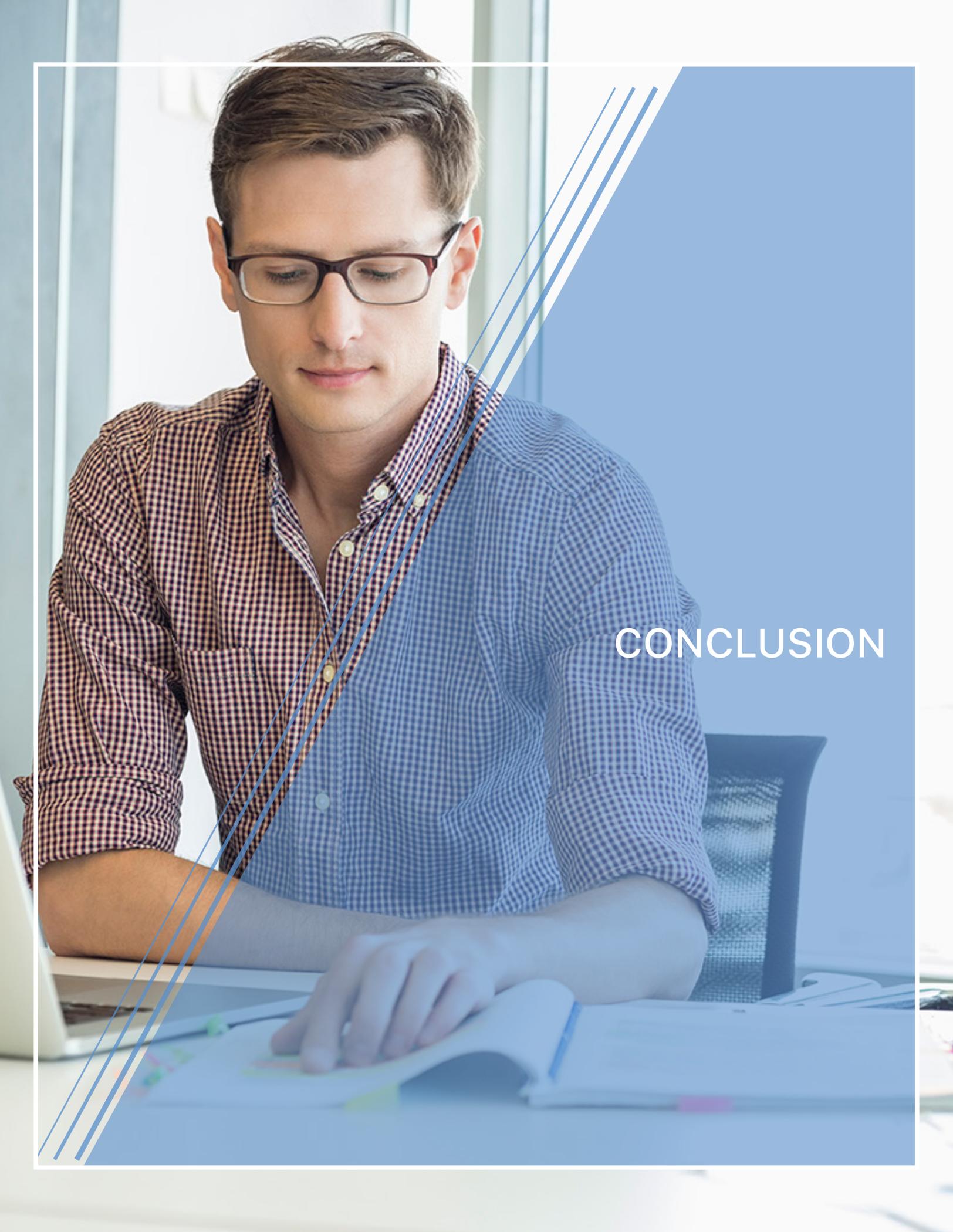
CONCLUSION

A rmed with the knowledge in this book, you now have the tools you need to launch your own Growth Team. As you have learned, a growth team can be a powerful tool in your pursuit of growing your product or business. While we often hear of tactics that ignite exponential growth, the reality is that there are many simple improvements you can make which can accelerate growth.As a growth leader, the key to achieving these results is to provide your team with the proper tools and lightweight process. Perhaps, most importantly, you must create a strong growth culture to help your team thrive. I hope the material in this book will enable you to do that effectively.

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